Selling, yet still social: The continuing rhetorical importance of a consociational personhood among the self-employed in eastern Germany

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Gareth Euan Hamilton

Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Anthropology, University of Durham

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ABSTRACT

This thesis, conducted as part of a project which aims to investigate sociality and rhetoric culture theory, does so by considering the rhetorics of personhood among the self-employed in Halle an der Saale, eastern Germany, based on extensive ethnographic fieldwork among businesspersons, advisors and officials. Sociality and rhetoric culture theory suggests that it is the persuasive action of humans which effects the continuous and inventive cultural change which our evolved interactive and intersubjective abilities permits. In a region which has seen particularly intense and often negative social, political and economic change towards late capitalism as it moved from a state socialism – where the egalitarian 'socialist personality' was fostered alongside a vehement criticism of capitalist individualism – I investigate the rhetorical strategies the self-employed use to describe themselves, their lives and businesses as they take up this most 'individualistic' practice as well as those employed by government and parts of the media who encourage it. Based on participant observation, interview data and media analyses, I argue that despite tacit approval of capitalism by the self-employed, the necessity to engage in it brought about by current circumstances is rhetorically tempered by the evocation of the increased sense of solidarity and consociality eastern Germans have been long noted to claim they possess in comparison to their western co-citizens. I also suggest that highlighting these aspects, and indeed being so, offers a distinct advantage to eastern businesspersons in an increasingly competitive and precarious world of encroaching neoliberal work practices.

After a thorough introduction to sociality and rhetorical culture theory, and a consideration of research methods and ethical and reflective issues, in Chapter 3 I introduce my fieldsite and its particular context. I show how aspects of GDR rhetoric regarding work and society still abound in Halle, both in the built landscape and in publications. Chapter 4 features a media analysis of how Germans are encouraged to change to become 'mini-corporations' and in it, and in Chapter 5, through participation at courses, and interviews, how acceptance of this is tempered by eastern German focus on consociality, and on the importance of the person. In Chapter 6, based on participation in product promotion I show how success follows focussing on these aspects by these precarious 'new self-employed'. In Chapter 7, I detail how through the use of promotional 'mass-gifts', they create sociality by evoking GDR-era social networks of sharing and consumption. Before a final conclusion, Chapter 8 shows how Halle itself uses people to market itself. I demonstrate how the city authorities, as well as the self-employed, use 'famous son' G. F. Handel, but also the self-employed themselves, in order to combat Halle's negative personification as the post-industrial, socio-economically deprived 'Grey Diva'.

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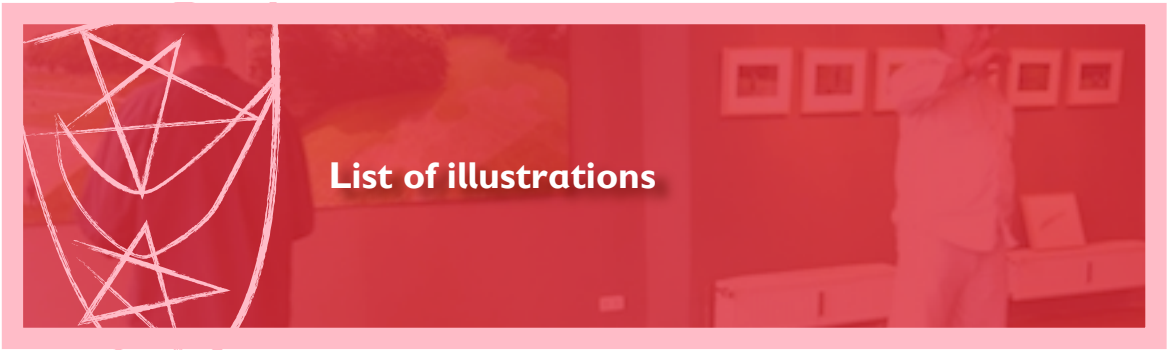

List of illustrations

Notes on abbreviations and terminology

This document is written in English, yet much of the native geographical, political terminology is, naturally, in German. Translating certain terms is somewhat complicated, and some direct translations are inadequate. Most problematic is the name of the area under consideration, that is, the part of the current Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) which was once part of the German Democratic Republic (GDR). The term '*Ostdeutschland*' is widely in use in German-language academic and public discourse (cf. Engler 2004; Staud 2000; Völker 2003; [n.d.] 2009g). Yet the English-language Cold War vernacular name for the GDR – 'East Germany' – precludes a direct translation due to potential confusion, while 'east Germany' would likewise be ambiguous. Thus, in comparison to common English-language usage (cf. Fulbrook 2005; Maier 1997; Gries 2004; Gallinat 2005; Carrithers 2008), I propose to employ 'eastern Germany' to describe this area, with a miniscule to acknowledge it is neither state nor legal entity. This area corresponds to that marked as such on the map shown in Fig. 3.3 on p. 58. The equivalent adjective will be 'eastern', accompanied by 'in the east' as a locative, and 'easterner' to denote residents of the east/former GDR citizens. This naming scheme also provides for 'western' terms, referring to the other parts of the Federal Republic. However, with a majuscule refers to the larger international concept of the 'West' – although sometimes the miniscule/majuscule terms are not mutually exclusive in their broader contexts. It must be recognised that this does not attempt to directly represent eastern German usage, but are used here for philosophical purposes and for means of precision.

Some further terminology:

Bloc party

Generic term for the four, small political parties permitted alongside the SED, but which for electoral purposes stood along with it and mass organisations on a single (and only) list of candidates, the'Unity List' of the 'National Front'.

BRD

The German-language term abbreviation for *Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Federal Republic of Germany). Also used before 1990.

Bundesland* (sing.) / *Bundesländer* (pl.). Also *Land* / *Länder

The federal (and technically sovereign) states of the German Federal Republic. With the epithet 'new' refers to the newly (re)created states once in the GDR and are now part of the FRG and a common synonym for the east.

DDR

The German-language term abbreviation for *Deutsche Demokratische Republik* (German Democratic Republic).

Ossi* and *Wessi

Diminutive nicknames for eastern and western Germans, respectively. May be used by either group to refer to themselves or to the other. At times may be pejorative, at times used with affection, or at times ironically, or a combination of these.

SED

Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands - 'Socialist Unity Party of Germany'. The Marxist-Leninist party in the GDR, formed by the compulsory merger of the then-socialist party with the communist party.

Wende

The German-language term, meaning 'turn' or 'change', used to describe the revolution which brought about the ending of socialist rule in the GDR, as well as the process of reunification.

Dedication and acknowledgements

To my parents, and the cat

I would like to thank many people for their kind help, assistance and support during my writing of this thesis, and the fieldwork undertaken to do so.

Firstly, I would like to thank my supervisors Professors Michael Carrithers and Bob Simpson and Dr Ina Dietzsch for their intellectual support and encouragement. Dr Dietzsch must also be thanked for her generosity and kindness in helping me when moving to Germany. Special thanks go to Prof. Carrithers for his faith in welcoming me onto this exciting, new venture of a project.

I would like also to thank those who have funded my PhD and enabled it to happen. In this regard, I thank the ESRC for their project-linked doctoral studentship. I also give great thanks to my parents for their extra injection of funds – and encouragement – when it was required!

For their useful comments and insights in research and teaching in Anthropology I would like to thank Prof. Helen Ball, Dr Sandra Bell, Dr Yulia Egorova, Dr Kate Hampshire, Dr Sue Lewis, Dr Steven Lyon, Dr Nicolette Makovicky and Dr Thomas Widlok (who also offered valuable, practical insights on Halle). From my earlier days in Modern Languages, I would like to thank

Prof. Jane Taylor, Dr Neil Thomas, Prof. Ann Moss, Prof. Jenny Britnell, Prof. Jonathan Long, Dr Ed Welch, Dr Andy Beresford and also Dr Len Scales from History.

I also offer great thanks to Prof. Peter Phillimore and Dr Peter Collins, the examiners of this thesis, for their insightful and helpful comments on my work, as well as their very welcome suggestions for improvement!

For friendship and moral support, my thanks go to my postgraduate colleagues in the Anthropology department during the writing-up after returning from Germany, especially Sally Atkinson, Julia Chase-Grey, Carla Handley, Caroline Jones, Julian Kotzé, Dr Mathilde Matthijsse, Savita Sathe, Katy Standish, Peter Tomlin and Sam Williams. Last but by no means least, I would like to thank David Henig for his intellectual insights and ideas which, alongside the support and friendship and some exploration of the Croatian/Slovenian border, Ljubljana and Maynooth, helped make the writing up process a much more interesting and fun experience!

In Halle, I am grateful to Dr Felix Girke and Dr Judith Beyer for their kindness and interesting insights into the life of that city. I would also like to thank Prof. Chris Hann of the Max-Planck Institute for Social Anthropology for his kind offer to let me attend writing-up seminars there and for access to the institute's library, and I thank Dr Esther Peperkamp for her advice on the self-employed in eastern Germany. For providing me a welcome and warm destination for relaxation in Austria, kind thanks go to Alois and Hanna Wascher in Köflach.

And naturally, I am especially grateful to all those people – some who appear in this document in anonymised form, and many others who do not – who participated in some way in my research, and in so doing provided me with the means to complete it. Without their generosity, it could not have been done at all.

Declaration and copyright statement

No part of the material presented in this thesis has been previously submitted by me or any other person for a degree in this or any other university. The citation of the work of others is acknowledged.

Parts of Chapter 1 in modified form have been published as Hamilton (2010c).

Parts of Chapter 5 were presented at the European Association of Social Anthropologists conference in Maynooth, August 2010, and also at the Public Culture in Theory and Practice Research Group, Durham University Department of Anthropology, November 2010. It is currently being prepared for publication.

PART

1

Introducing the research

Theory, methods and background

Foreword

This thesis was undertaken in order to investigate sociality and rhetoric culture theory (Carrithers 2005b, a, 2008, 2009b) as part of an ESRC-funded project which aimed to so do in the particular context of eastern Germany.[1] As a researcher on the project, I undertook the sub-project dealing with personhood among eastern Germans, and chose the self-employed, in and around the city of **Halle an der Saale** (also known locally as 'Halle'), as a research topic. This is in light of the particularly interesting context the historical political, social and economic circumstances which exist in that area, and which, I will demonstrate below, has ongoing effects upon that sense of personhood.[2] In following chapters, as might be expected, further detail and context will be provided as to why this is the case, as well as an exposition of the theoretical basis on which sociality and rhetoric culture theory (hereinafter also abbreviated as 'SRC') is built. Further, the ethnographic content on which analyses are based will also be explored in detail.

It is neither wise nor practical for an apprentice, whether a craftsman or an academic, to serve too many masters. With this in mind, and given the nature of the thesis as the product of three years' scholarship and as part of the above-mentioned project, it concentrates on Carrithers' SRC interpretation of rhetoric culture. The ethnographic data proves this is apposite. However, there is a broader group of scholars who approach culture as being based in rhetoric,

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[1] For terminology used, see pp.xvii–xviii.

[2] In this thesis, 'self-employed' refers to persons who are not involved in a directly-employed relationship in order to provide the financial means to conduct their lives.

or rhetoric as being the basis of culture. While these may be our contemporaries in the 'Rhetoric Culture Project' (Strecker and Tyler 2009b; represented by Carrithers 2009c; Gudeman 2009b; Meyer and Girke [in press]; Strecker et al. 2003), rhetoric, understood as persuasion in all forms, has been viewed as key in human society. As Carrithers notes, SRC represents 'a vigorous recent extension of older ideas' (Carrithers [n.d.]). This sense of persons with different methods but coming together to achieve one task, of building on ideas from the past while moving forward, chimed with a similar idea, expressed in a powerful image I saw in the Bauhaus in Dessau, near Halle.[3] The image was Lyonel (Charles) Feininger's energetic woodcut of a cathedral, with three shooting stars with vibrant tails meeting in the sky above, which appeared on the 1919 cover of Gropius's first manifesto and prospectus for this, his new school of architecture, art and design. Gropius chose the image as cover for this document whose task was to persuade students to join this new experiment in design as it matched its more ancient heritage. Fig. 0.1 shows it as part of an souvenir reproduction package sold in Weimar to mark the Bauhaus' ninetieth anniversary celebrations in 2009.

The Medieval cathedral represented a time when the architect, the mason and the artist worked together, using their respective skills, to create the *Gesamtkunstwerk* which the masterpiece of the massive, beautiful building on the large scale, with intricate internal beauty to match, represents. Gropius wished to emulate such working practices, and the school's continuing influence on design can still be seen, and, for example, visiting the organisation's ninetieth anniversary exhibition in Berlin shows that the timelessness of their productions matches those of the most stunning cathedral, even that which can be seen from the window of the office in which this thesis is produced. Whether sitting in that cathedral where the masons' marks can still be seen, or in the *Mensa* (refectory) in Dessau which also functioned as a stage area (for Gropius saw artistic performance as an integral part of the learning experience), one might well imagine the debates and interactions which enabled this creativity to come to life. At the time

[3] For an ethnographic account of the somewhat contested views of the Bauhaus within Dessau, see De Soto (2000).

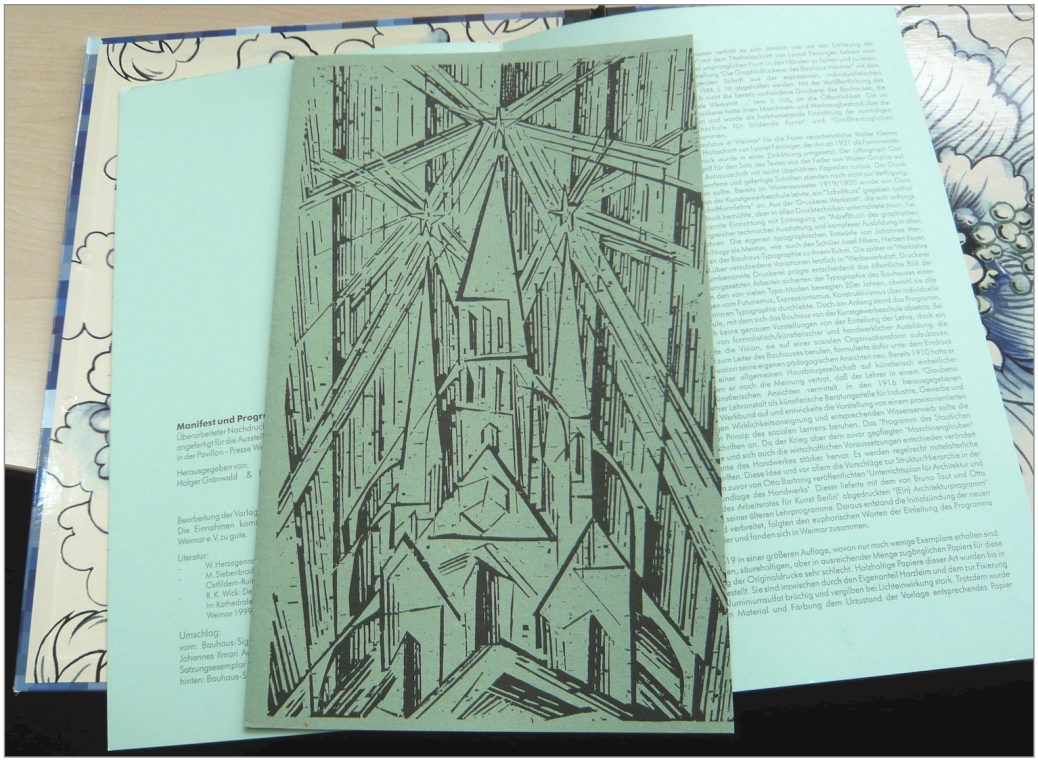

Fig. 0.1

Souvenir reproduction pack of the original Bauhaus manifesto of 1919, sold in Weimar in 2009. The original version of the manifesto was not green, however.

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the image appealed to me not only because Feininger had strong Halle connections, and his art, often featuring Halle scenes, features prominently in the newly-renovated Moritzburg gallery in the city, as well as on information panels near to the locations he painted. Having gone on a guided tour of the city on my day visit there, I had been shown these. Alongside this, I felt that there was a certain resonance with my own academic career, a mixture of various disciplines including a dalliance with medieval German studies, but also because of its resonance with the theoretical basis of the current work. This is not only due to the varied approaches which rhetoric culture scholars take, but also in that metaphor is one of the tools identified by those scholars, including Fernandez , and Carrithers (2005a, b, 2008, 2009b), through which rhetoric is used in changing and creating culture. The contemporary and continuing importance of the Bauhaus is naturally not only based on the powerful persuasive force of Feininger's metaphor, and Gropius' adoption of it. Their creativity in that domain was matched by excellence and

innovation in their other works. However, a programme for action was required, with a persuasive metaphor thereupon, to create the situation in which this was possible.

In an interesting twist, unknown to me at the time, Feininger originally entitled the work *Cathedral of Socialism*. Like the area itself where the fieldwork took place which was once socialist, it was given or adopted a new role, and the image itself is reproduced and reused, for example, in Fig. 0.1 for different means altogether. This taking up and moulding of cultural items is another of the central tenets of SRC. And by no means least, the image likewise often reflects the entrepreneurs themselves, whose starry trails often changed trajectory as a result. In this thesis, I will show, among other things, how those with plans for society and for others therein present those plans. In this connection I show how the German press and government envisage the kind of people they view as being required to become entrepreneurs. I will show how people in practice take on this rhetoric, and either change or do not change to become these persons. I show how the self-employed in eastern Germany live their lives, are successful, and describe what they do. I will show how this relates to their present circumstances, but also how the culture of the GDR-era past plays its part in the contemporary practice. Mirroring the cathedral builders, the Bauhaus, and to some extent those persons in the rhetoric culture project on whose work this thesis builds and expands, these self-employed persons take their abilities and use them with great energy and persistence in order to make a living is as pleasing as anything created by the Bauhaus. In many cases this is after great changes have taken place in their lives. It would not be exaggerated to (metaphorically) portray them as the shooting stars seen in Feininger's work. Before, however, they can be introduced, it is necessary to present the theoretical framework of the thesis, which now follows, in Chapter 1.

1 Introduction and literature review

Sociality and rhetoric culture theory, and its relationship to the themes this thesis investigates

Introduction

In this chapter I introduce sociality and rhetoric culture theory in detail, how it functions, and further how it relates to wider anthropological theory. I suggest that it is a valuable and important theoretical and analytical tool with which to conduct ethnographic research. However, in order to do so, attention must be paid to the particular themes this research covers or is related to. As this thesis focuses on the sense of personhood of self-employed persons, I will show how I envisage this theoretical approach relates to both economic anthropology in general, as well as to various theories of personhood. Ethnographically, however, in the broadest sense, despite its concentration on Germany and its relevance to that country's ethnography, the focus on its eastern part qualifies it as belonging to another trend within the discipline, and in the academy in general. As eastern Germany was before 1989/90 a state socialist country in the form of the German Democratic Republic, it is also a piece of 'postsocialist' anthropology. This branch of research within socio-cultural anthropology, which I will move on to consider below, is based ethnographically on areas which are geographically distant. Although there are exceptions, such as Pietilä's (2007) study of non-Comecon member Tanzania, the majority of these ethnographies investigate topics in areas at some point part of the Soviet sphere of influence. As a result, studies from Mongolia (Humphrey 1992), Georgia (Manning and Uplisashvili 2007), Russia (Vitebsky 2005; Humphrey 1998), Armenia (Barsegian 2000), the Western Balkans (Hayden 2002), Hungary (Hann 2006), the Czech Republic (Bunzl 2000), Slovakia (Makovicky 2009) and eastern Germany (Berdahl 1999, 2010; Dietzsch 2010; De

Soto 2000)[4] are but examples of examples of this range.[5] Despite this lengthy list of anthropological contributions to 'postsocialist' scholarship, works which deal with postsocialist topics are produced by scholars from a multitude of disciplines, not only socio-cultural anthropology. For instance, these even include 'transitiology', the specialised study of the movement from state socialism to Western liberal capitalist democracy. However, anthropologists who themselves engage with such themes have readily, and with justification, pointed out some of the problematic aspects which such works very often exhibit. Berdahl offers a particularly efficient summary of the criticism, and thus I will base my summary of these on Berdahl's. This is due to the fact that she has conducted fieldwork in the area which once formed the German Democratic Republic, and having thus produced works of postsocialist ethnography herself (1999, 2000b, 2010), her criticisms hold particular weight here. However, there is no shortage of similarly-themed critiques from other anthropologists working in other countries (Verdery 1996; Barsegian 2000; Hann et al. 2002).

Postsocialist studies – criticism and solutions?

The first of Berdahl's criticisms of wider postsocialist scholarship is that these non-anthropological studies have tended to focus on wider metanarratives, the 'grand transitions', either ignoring individual, personal stories or viewing them as problematic. So while Maier, whose historical account of the 'end of east Germany' is otherwise positively regarded by Berdahl, describes his interviews with former GDR citizens as having 'presented a particular hazard' because some interviewees 'recalled their past socialist commitment with incisive self-criticism, some with unabashed attachment, others with disorientation' (1997:xvi–xvii), the anthropologist would correctly see this as a rich source of data. Secondly, it is not uncommon to encounter these larger metanarratives 'in a discourse of capitalist "triumphalism" which

[4] Berdahl (2010) is a posthumous collection edited by Matti Bunzl which reproduces many of her shorter, single-authored publications on eastern Germany.

[5] Studies on societies which are still *state* socialist, but moving away from classic planned economy-style policies, such as China or Vietnam are increasingly being included in the list of 'postsocialist' studies. Many examples can be found in West and Raman (2009).

entails a certain, linear, teleological thinking in relation to the direction of change: from socialism or dictatorship to liberal democracy, from plan to market economy' (Berdahl 2000b: 1). These, it is argued correctly, seem too simplistic given actual events, alongside their 'West is best' ideological dimension. Berdahl sees anthropology as a solution to these issues with its ethnographic research methods and the close attention to the daily life and views of those studied providing a counterpart to imprecise, one-sided metanarratives. As anthropologists, it would be difficult to argue against such a meritorious view. And in Berdahl's opinion, the benefits are mutual: if anthropology is necessary for a thorough study of a postsocialist topic, then it is complementarily the case that

> postsocialist transitions offer opportunities to explore some of the central issues of [anthropology]: the relationship among economic systems, political entities, and culture; the construction of identity, ethnicity and nationalism; social and cultural change. (Berdahl 1999:11)

Given the above criticisms of other 'triumphalist' disciplines, it would be ironic indeed if anthropologists were themselves to triumphantly and unquestioningly present themselves and their methods as the saviours of postsocialist studies without considering their utility to some extent. To avoid such accusations, I now wish to assess whether current anthropological methods and theory are themselves adequate for the lofty task as set by Berdahl. The final of the 'central issues' common to both anthropology and postsocialist studies as noted in the citation above (social and cultural change) is one that Berdahl often invokes as something which anthropology can explain. However, given Durkheimian organic and change-resistant models of society, or the historical reluctance (or in certain cases, hostility) of either American cultural anthropology (cf. Benedict 1935) or British structural-functionalist social anthropology (cf. Radcliffe-Brown and Forde 1950) to deal with such change it may seem somewhat incongruous. Even modern concepts popular within wider social science disciplines are prone to this. Giddens's structuration theory, described by Carrithers as a 'desperate verbal substantive [coined] in order to retain the metaphor of "structure", while still making it applicable to a

world shot through with historicity and constant metamorphosis' (2005b:582), or Bourdieu's *habitus* somewhat privilege cultural stasis (Ahearn 2001:117-18), for example.

It is important to state here that this is not a call to abandon all other theoretical viewpoints, for there is much utility in them for various purposes. However, I will show below how SRC goes further and in some senses is applicable in all circumstances, because rhetoric is the basis of human sociality, not only in rapidly changing societies like the postsocialist. However, it must first be noted that societies and cultures *do* change. They cannot be imagined like a cup to which one belongs or not (Benedict 1935:22). Neither is it possible, as it was once claimed, to 'deal[...] with a system as it exists at a certain time, abstracting it as far as possible from any changes it may be undergoing' (Radcliffe-Brown and Forde 1950:3). The experience of postsocialist societies – among innumerable other situations – proves that change does occur, and as Wolf (1982) for example demonstrates, cultures are affected by other cultures in this constant process of change throughout time, and 'time' has been with us for a long time, and marches ever onwards. I will return to this point again below, but here it suffices to pose the question: where should the barriers for our considerations lie for a postsocialist study? From 1989, the year of revolutions? Or much earlier? And indeed, where should the geographical boundaries of such analyses lie? Hann (2006, 2007) proffers two significant solutions, ways forward indeed, for postsocialist anthropological studies faced with such temporal and spatial questions, to which my consideration now turns.

The first of these suggestions is that anthropologists should focus on different historical horizons, as 'commemoration of past events is constantly shaping our understanding of the present' (Hann 2007:5). These include as far back as the Neolithic, quite clearly very much before the end, or indeed the beginning, of the socialist era (Hann 2006:256). The second is to focus on Eurasia as the geographic and cultural context for postsocialist studies, given that the influences on postsocialist societies results from, and reflects upon, this broader landmass (cf. the list of areas noted above) in a cultural, geographical and, indeed, historical sense. The

writers of these studies, he suggests, should 'not content themselves with a "presentist" perspective' (Hann 2007:7). This questioning of time is indeed wise, as twenty years after the revolutions of 1989 and the end of the Soviet Union in 1991, how long can a 'transition' phase really be said to be a coherent whole? Hann, in such a situation suggests taking insights from historians, and even working along with practitioners of *Volkskund*e, or folkloric studies. Hann describes this potentially exciting mixture of disciplines, temporalities and spaces as a 'creative consortium of distinctive clusters of scholars' (2007:59). Whether one agrees with the precise membership of this new collegial constellation, in the current academic climate interdisciplinarity is heavily and justifiably encouraged due to its potential intellectual productivity. In any case, the examples in this thesis will show that persons living in eastern Germany do themselves use images from the past, and from multiple domains, in their daily lives. In this vein I suggest that this historical focus is very justified. Knowledge of the sources of the things connoted is unquestionably enhanced by experience in '*Germanistik'*, German Studies, or History, for example, whether one might share knowledge from the disciplines themselves or their members.

Despite the validity of keeping an historical perspective, it is also important to remember that we are anthropologists who have wisely stepped down from our collective verandah. And while Hann also argues that 'good ethnography forms only one part of social anthropology' (2007:2), he notes correctly that his call for a focus on 'multiple temporalities' should remain allied to our field experiences and ethnographic writing. This, it will be recalled, is where Berdahl argues our strengths are most exhibited. So, to précis and merge the requirements suggested by Berdahl and Hann, a theoretical or analytical framework which can adequately describe and analyse societal change, longitudinally and historically, within a large area with cultural linkages is required, which we as anthropologists may use for our analyses. While others might suggest postcolonialist theories (Bunzl 2000; Cooke 2005), ethnicity (Hayden 2002) or going back to classical analyses of 'class' (Sampson 2008; Dunn 2008), I suggest that by focusing on one narrow aspect of time, social structure or 'identity', they fail to take into account the

complexity of the ongoing and continually interactive nature of life as it is lived. Rather, given its usefulness in focusing on how people *themselves* experience these things, and make sense of them, I suggest that sociality and rhetorical culture is a much preferable theoretical tool with which to step into the breach. And it is not just relevant for a postsocialist society by any means. In this thesis I demonstrate how with its inherent sense of 'historicity' (Carrithers 2009b) of our ever mutable social life, SRC allows the methodological benefits of ethnography to be reaped in times of change, be it at the whole, or intersocietal or intercultural level, or at the micropolitical level, or indeed, at the level where any one may affect the other.

Rhetoric – more than just hot air

It is very possible that the mere mention of the word 'rhetoric' may have an alarming effect upon the reader or listener, given contemporary meanings which highlight its negative connotations. Deirdre McCloskey, an economist who has written on the rhetoricity of economic theory, notes that, for example, 'it is used by newspapers as a synonym for the many words in English which sneer at speech: ornament, frill, hot air, advertising, slickness, deception, fraud' (1998:5). Whether malevolent such as Belial in *Paradise Lost* (Fish 1995:203-204) or simply idiotic such as Janotus de Bragmardo in *Gargantua* (Rabelais 1955[c.1532-1564]:76-81), it is certainly not unknown for the rhetor, that is, the person who produces rhetoric, to be seen in a less than positive light. However, in rhetoric culture theory, a more neutral position is taken. Here, the fundamental tenet of rhetoric as a persuasive force is maintained, based on the Classical idea that 'just as rhetoric is founded in culture, culture is founded in rhetoric' should not be ignored (Strecker et al. 2003). It was mentioned above in the Preface that this project focused, and thesis focuses, on Carrithers' (2005a, b, 2008, 2009a, b, c) version of the rhetoric culture approach. The Rhetoric Culture Project itself is broader in its membership, and there are even some differences in terminology employed by those who work with such themes, e.g. Fernandez also speaks of 'pronominalism' (2010) and 'tropology' (2009), and Herzfeld (2005,

2009) prefers the term 'social poetics'.[6] However, the uniting factor is that culture is ever mutable and rhetorical is what is shared among its followers. Indeed, the group is not limited necessarily to socio-cultural anthropologists. Although it will be noted that the editors themselves are all social/cultural anthropologists from the US, the UK and Germany this disciplinary diversity is evinced by the collection of chapters by authors in the three (soon to be four) edited volumes produced as part of the *Studies in rhetoric and culture* series (Strecker and Tyler 2009b; Carrithers 2009c; Gudeman 2009b; Meyer and Girke [in press]).[7]

If a thesis based on rhetoric culture were submitted from a linguistics department, or a Classics department, however, it would likely appear very different from this. In a Classics department, it would concentrate much on the Latin-named Classical forms of rhetoric's heritage – as Meyer does when he gives a potted history of those who were interested in rhetoric being based in culture and vice versa. In this, as he moves chronologically forward we meet various Sophists such as Isocrates, then Cicero and Quintilian, then Vico and Nietzche among others along the way (Meyer 2009). A linguist would likely concentrate on pragmatics, as Tyler himself does in his *Said and the unsaid* (1978). This is not to say that a close attention to detail of what is 'said and unsaid' in situations is not important to socio-cultural anthropologists. It is key not only to the broader rhetoric culture theoretical standpoint, but they also focus on other sources of rhetoric. In this regard, where printed texts and mediated discourse in general can be analysed on the same basis as that of everyday life, there is a certain danger for the socio-cultural anthropologist. Some criticism has been received for the lack of 'ethnographic-ness', so to speak, of the works so far in the broader rhetoric culture project. In his review of Carrithers (2009c), the second edited volume, despite an overall positive impression of the theory and its application, Werbner states that

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[6] Herzfeld is concerned about the term 'rhetoric culture' lest it give the suggestion that there is any culture which is not rhetorical (2009:183-84)!

[7] A detailed history of the Rhetoric Culture Project appears in the Preface to Strecker and Tyler (2009b), as well as on Strecker, Meyer and Tyler (2003).

> Overwhelmingly, direct observation of dialogue and dialogics, of both speaker and audience, is not in the driver's seat for this collection. The rhetoric addressed is more hearsay than heard-said, more from literary sources, diaries, fiction fragments, oratory texts, online archives of *The Guardian* or *The Times* (New York and London), the odd anecdote without a direct word from its main subject(s), than from first-hand cases. (Werbner 2011:201)

Where he does receive ethnographic, direct observation, he is pleased, however, noting he is 'hopeful for more analysis of "the concrete practices in discourse" in the rest of the volumes of this continuing series' (2011:201). There are three important points to be made in reply to Werbner's comments. On a positive note, the first is his approval for the concept. The second is a mild rebuttal, for I partly agree, as I shall describe below. The presence of a chapter on the use of chiasmus (reverse repetition) by Lévi-Strauss in his anthropological writings by Wiseman (2009) who taught me about French intellectuals as an undergraduate in a Modern Languages department certainly highlights that anthropologists must be aware that others outside our own disciplines are interested in our work, and can contribute, and vice versa – just as Hann suggests with historians and folklorists. My comment above on the benefit of specialised knowledge of a particular language and its cultural context is particularly relevant here. However, I do agree that the ethnographic method itself is where socio-cultural anthropology goes further than literature on its own, and one of the benefits – and freedoms – that it gives is being able to move away from texts themselves and talk to those who receive them. This does not mean that discourse, mediated verbal or non-verbal, physical or visual, is not an important part in the analytical mix. It is important to concentrate on the ethnographic experience too.

To hopefully fulfil Werbner's hopes, this thesis does both, in that it represents a thorough ethnography based on everyday practice in eastern Germany, but also showing how mediated sources are part of that practice, and make constant attempts to play a significant role in shaping that practice. In this vein, like Carrithers' view of rhetoric culture, it appreciates theoretical and contextual influences from outside, but remains fully within socio-cultural

anthropology – as the methodological benefits (cf. Berdahl's comments above) mean it should. As Carrithers noted in his contribution to Goody's edited volume on social intelligence, the kind of 'narrative thinking' – which I will detail below, and show being used throughout the thesis – 'differs from, but complements, [...] other means of interactive planning'. He goes on to say 'this is partly a matter of scale' and that

> 'conversation and discourse analysis [...] work usually on two interlocutors interacting for perhaps no more than a few seconds or minutes. On the other hand, narrative thought may easily comprehend more – sometimes many more – than two people and may cover days, years, or even a lifetime and beyond. (Carrithers 1995:261)

Thus, whereas Hann calls for the entry of 'History' into our social analyses, instead, in Carrithers' particular vision of human sociality, 'historicity' is attributed to culture. This is a more complex vision, akin to 'the eventfulness of things, to the fact that things keep going on, relentlessly, whatever the plans we lay or the devices we invent to forestall events' (Carrithers 2008:162).

Historicity, or this eventfulness in human life, is something anthropologists themselves – far removed from those I criticised earlier for their static and precisely-bounded views of culture – have indeed tried to deal with. For example, as mentioned above Wolf (1982) shows a picture of a world in constant flux through time and ever ongoing contact between cultures. Fox (R.M. Fox 1985), Rosaldo (1989) and Ortner (2006) have attempted to create adequate ways of dealing with such changing situations, where culture itself is modified and moulded by people in those situations. In this sense, rhetoric culture in general fits into this stream of thought and, in a logical sense of development, improves thereupon. Thus, the analytical position taken here is more complex and useful, and draws on Carrithers' view that the ability for people, as human actors, to be able to make this cultural change occur and deal with it, is based on the evolved 'social bias' in humans (cf. Goody 1995a:1–13). Carrithers himself prefers the term 'sociality' for his particular conception thereof, as first detailed in *Why humans have cultures* (1992) – hence the 'S' in 'SRC'. The implication of this particularly high level of social skill is the ability to mould

and adapt complex social schemes. It is, more precisely, our species' highly developed propensity for social interaction that he refers to as 'sociality', and he suggests this permits us to think 'interactively'. Carrithers formulated his original take on 'sociality' in answer to a question he posed himself: 'Given the diversity of human forms of life, what must be true of humans in general?' (1992:4). With humans being in a natural state of dealing with and creating change, it is this spirit of wider applicability which takes sociality's usefulness, and that of its combination with the broader idea of rhetoric culture theory, much further than Hann's Eurasian focus, and arguably even before the Neolithic. This longitudinal dimension represented by 'historicity' seems in the first instance to meet Hann's call for an historically-imbued dimension to an anthropological postsocialist study. As shall be seen below, the analytical tools it provides indeed further this view. However, the concept has a much broader and deeper and multidimensional potential, as my detailed explanation of how the theory can be imagined at work, which now follows, demonstrates.

Sociality and rhetoric culture theory

The first comment that must be made about SRC is that it is based broadly on a phenomenological epistemological framework after Schütz (e.g. 1962, 1967). It is further informed by the principles of an ethnomethodological approach where social life is not merely governed by a rigid set of structural rules which social actors automatically obey, but in which humans create meaning through interactions in situations (Garfinkel 1967; Heritage 1984; Suchman 1987). In this sense, while a rhetoric culture analysis can be carried out for a literary text, ancient or modern, it can be applied to a very time-compact situation, much like discourse analysts or ethnomethodologists might. However, SRC moves beyond the obvious limitations of focusing on a mere few lines in a discourse analysis, or focusing on how sense is made with a narrow, short piece of speech in ethnomethodology with no reference to the ongoing cultural framework. In comparison, SRC allows what is said in one place to be analysed as part of a

cultural narrative of a much greater length and is thus one way of overcoming the limitations of other theories which deal with change.

The second comment is based on the results of the social bias in humans, as noted above, acting upon, and permitting, the processes of cultural formation and change. In creating the variety of cultural forms we witness, and managing the events which occur every day, we as humans evidently form complex relationships. Further, to manage these effectively as social actors we must understand others' actions and intentions (Carrithers 1992:55-60). The 'intersubjectivity' required to engage within the intricate web of interactions we thus face is attained through the further evolved cognitive ability 'to generate long connected skeins of actions and reactions' and 'to comprehend such complexity through narrative thought' (Carrithers 2005b:577) It is rhetoric, to be understood as an attempt to persuade, which is the moving force in these interactions, which people use to (or at least attempt to) 'get things done'. The interactivity involved requires us to hold a conception of culture seen as ever moving and metamorphic, changed by such rhetorical action as is required. And such movement is in no short supply. In this thesis it will be witnessed that the postsocialist period in eastern Germany has provided an extra large dose. I will show later how various instances of what I will now describe in theoretical terms actually functions in situations. Although I have mentioned '*situations*' above, here it takes on a particularly pregnant meaning. Carrithers defines situations as something humans find themselves in as a 'result of some episode of historicity', some event or happening of varying size, formality or proximity 'to which we must respond' (2008:162-63). When we as '*rhetors*' – the person who produces the rhetoric – are first presented with such a situation it is likely to be in state of '*inchoacy*'.

At such moments, the situation represents the 'unformed, the uncategorized, the so-far chaotic', the 'continually threatening uncertainty, obscurity, and danger' (Carrithers 2005a:442). It is thus a state where something can, might, or will happen, or indeed might well not. If a rhetorical action is made, however, a '*performance*' occurs. This is the culmination of the process of

'mak[ing] a movement', in the sense suggested by Fernandez (1986), 'toward sense and policy, toward an interpretation of the situation and toward a plan' to resolve the situation (Carrithers 2005a:442). In other words, an attempt is made to understand or move events onwards. However, it should be noted that unlike the original term as coined by Austin (1975) 'performative' does *not* guarantee successful action. Rather, here, the term refers generally to the attempt (that is, the act) to *persuade* . In any case, if something does occur, it is always 'moved by the rhetorical will, the *energeia*, of those who for the moment hold the floor and aim to realize a plan or intention through, and upon, others' (Carrithers 2005b:578). However, given that situations are fluid, and that others may attempt to perform back, so to speak, the rhetor is not an agent in complete control. Carrithers thus describes the situation of any rhetor as 'agency-cum-patiency'. This sense, which he suggests 'recovers that fundamentally *inter*active character that makes rhetoric integral to human sociality' highlights that a rhetor is also acted upon by the rhetoric of others (Carrithers 2005b:578, original emphasis). Indeed, they are likely subject to the force of their own rhetoric.

It is important at this point, to consider how a situation functions – what occurs when the rhetor is confronted by a situation. In such circumstances, the rhetor develops a plan, firstly choosing the appropriate 'contrivances of culture plucked from a common store' (Carrithers 2005a:442) of resources which can be called '*cultural items*'. These chosen, to render the movement intersubjective and thus liable to be understood and actioned by others, a single or combination of rhetorical tools is chosen. Tools available might include forms of eloquence as in Classical rhetoric, represented, for example, in Medieval literature as 'twelve ladies' (Chastelain et al. 2002[1463]). Yet this is not necessarily required in SRC, and depends heavily on the situation. Rather more decisive in the question whether the rhetoric is ultimately effective is related to the choices the rhetor has made in regard to '*kairos*'. *Kairos* (*καιρός*) refers to the timeliness and appropriateness in light of the situation which is underway. This could be envisaged as the appropriateness of combination of cultural items with rhetorical tools in the particular situation's circumstances. Eloquence, combined with elaborate language, might

indeed be appropriate to certain circumstances, but equally 'bald' (cf. P. Brown and Levinson 1987:94ff.) language might be what is required. If the requirement for eloquence can be left to one side along with 'ornament' and 'frill' and 'hot air', there are three other principle rhetorical tools which have been the subject of focus within the sphere of rhetoric culture, and which Carrithers in particular has written about. These are the *metaphor* (2005a, b), the '*story seed*' (2009b) within the broader field of *narrative* thinking (1992, 1995), and the creative use of *pronouns* (also known as 'pronominalism' [cf. Fernandez 2010]).

Thinking of the first rhetorical tool, the metaphor has had a long interest for social scientists. Lakoff and Johnson, who demonstrate extensively the different forms of metaphors humans use, correctly suggest that 'it is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action, and state that 'our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of how we think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature' (1981:3). Carrithers in turn defines a metaphor as 'the use of ideas and images from a sphere of experience which is more or less understood and taken for granted to grasp and organize for the mind's eye another, more problematic sphere' (Carrithers 2005a:442). Alternatively, Fernandez's definition – 'a strategic predication upon an inchoate pronoun (an I, a you, a we, a they) which makes a movement and leads to a performance' (1986:8) – focuses attention on its performative dimension. The second rhetorical tool follows on from this second definition of metaphor, and adapts it into the more narrative 'story seed'. Alongside others, Carrithers has long written on the importance of narrative and narrative thinking in social interactions (1992, 1995). The story seed concept is a refinement, or distillation, of this. Indeed, a story seed is in many ways a distilled narrative. Here, a 'story' can be envisaged as the 'strategic insertion of inchoate pronouns in an inchoate situation into a story line which makes a move and leads to a performance' (Carrithers 2009b:38). Following from this, story seeds could be defined as compact narratives, perhaps even of one word, potentially very potent in comparison to their size. Although not necessarily so tiny, they can represent in their most potent form 'minute seeds of story which, in a way directly analogous to the condensed, affecting, effective work of metaphor, unfold to make a movement and lead to a

performance' (Carrithers 2009b:40). The third main rhetorical tool, the use of those 'strategic pronouns' met in the definition of the metaphor and the story seed is another area where rhetorical creativity can occur. All three, or more, can combine to create an act of persuasion, and below, I will show how these rhetorical tools can be witnessed in use in postsocialist eastern Germany. However, rhetoric needs some kind of audience if it can function at all. Further, it needs some means of moving between people.

Creating culture – audiences, transmission, and culture's movement onwards

There is a risk, given the tradition that rhetoric generally is spoken, that its visual and gesture-based forms are ignored. Rhetoric culture analysis does not only deal with speech, but with other forms of human communication. Of course, rhetoric may be presented by a rhetor via the medium of speech. Yet, it might be equally visual in the form of a picture or diagram or photograph as it might be textual. Indeed, as the example of the Hamar *woko* stick shows, a piece of material culture used in one situation (a stick used for dealing with a thorn bush, pushing with one end, pulling with the other), can be used metaphorically in another (in a ceremony to bless and curse) by recreating the physical action involved (Carrithers 2005b: 577-78; cf. Pankhurst 2006:263). This thesis will show how these various forms are used, and how rhetoric presented in one medium affects another. Similarly, it shows how various audiences can be addressed at one time, while potentially having a differing effect on another. In general, the membership of the audience to which rhetoric is presented can vary immensely in scale. As I noted above, given the 'agency-cum-patiency' of human interaction, it is quite possible and likely the rhetor themselves is perfectly able to be the sole or one of the targets for their own rhetoric. When others are involved, this might range from the one-to-one conversation to the group of persons innumerable and individually unknown to the rhetor, such as a public rally or the public formed by the readership of a magazine or internet site, or a television or radio audience. The breadth of audience types shown here demonstrates the potential for the wide-ranging application of the theory, in different situations at various levels,

both immediate and far from the rhetoric's utterance. Further, as can be seen often in this thesis, a piece of rhetoric from the past seems frequently to turn up in the present, and can have effects similar to, or somewhat different from, or somewhere between the two, on the audience of the present. Thus, national discourses can be analysed in their relation to the individual and it is this universality which is one of sociality and rhetoric culture's greatest benefits for anthropological study because it can be applied to almost any situation.

If successful, a piece of rhetoric can use a cultural item and by being transmitted in various fashions and directions can become a cultural item itself. It is thus, by adapting cultural rules and items for purposes of persuasion in situations that culture itself is created and modified in an ever ongoing period. In Hamilton (2010c) I analysed how people in Saxony-Anhalt (my fieldsite) use narrative and are most creative with cultural items in order to persuade others to combat the decline of their cities. I also showed how other cultural items from one period, with a dubious reputation, can be used to sell retail goods in the present. In Hamilton (2010a), referring to a case I will mention again in Chapter 3, I showed how cultural items which might appear relatively inoffensive to one set of people can cause much offence to another when they are 'overheard' on the Internet. Carrithers has analysed, for example, how German Chancellor Willi Brandt's gesture of publicly kneeling before the Warsaw ghetto memorial in that city in 1970, which at the time was a novel act in its context, has bequeathed a new cultural item, the '*Kniefall*' to the German language and 'German' culture. Germans know what the *Kniefall* in Warsaw is. I am only being slightly ironic here, as defining it is one of the questions on the new German citizenship test for immigrants (Averesch 2008). In any case, living in Germany in 2008-09 allowed me to see various examples of how it is still being used. Fig. 1.1 shows how, even today, creative uses of the concept are occurring, while the original meaning still keeps its significance.

In Fig. 1.1 it is possible to see how the act of the *Kniefall* has been recreated in monument form not 100 metres from the original memorial, in a part of the square renamed after Brandt in

2000. I visited the square and noted a young woman, an older man, and a small girl talking and pointing to the monument. Although I cannot speak Polish, the gestures and tone of voice suggested to me the significance was being explained. However, the effects can be detected away from the physical space of the square. In the bottom-right of Fig. 1.1, the reader can see my father, whom I took along to the square. I explained the story to him too, taking the story back to Northern Ireland. Of course, I would not have investigated it at all if it were not for Carrithers' paper in the *JRAI* (2005b), which has an international audience. He would not have investigated it if it had not had a large effect on German audiences, appearing in the German press at the time, including in iconic press photographs. The most famous can be seen in the *Spiegel* cover ([n.d.] 1971) in the centre of the diagram. It was this importance which sees a 'blown-up' copy in the national federal history museum in Bonn, shown above. This further importance means a visit by Brandt's eventual successor Schröder to rename the square, as well as a speech before the *Bundestag* by Israeli minister Peres in which he references the speech. While all these acts maintain the original meaning of sorrowfully and respectfully asking for forgiveness, other significances develop. In a collection of readers letters to an Austrian newspaper asking if we should do a *Kniefall* before large companies who 'always get their own way' ([n.d.] 2008b). There, this forgiveness-seeking is reversed to prostrating oneself in acquiescence to greater powers. And football gives an example in further unexpected directions. In 2008, coach Jürgen Klinsmann and his Bayern Munich team dropped to their knees facing their fans at the end of a game, something stated in the press as never having been done before by a Bayern trainer. Like with Brandt in Warsaw, it appears to have been unexpected and spontaneous, with a team mate saying to Klinsmann, 'Get on your knees now!'. Yet here the purpose is thanking the fans for their part in an impending league victory. So, the *Kniefall* as cultural item gets taken to places and contexts most unconnected to the original, here from apology to gratitude.

Fig. 1.1 has another meaning which I wish to express. There is a risk that noticing rhetorical usage can become tangled and messy. Of course, this is partly as a result of the way rhetoric

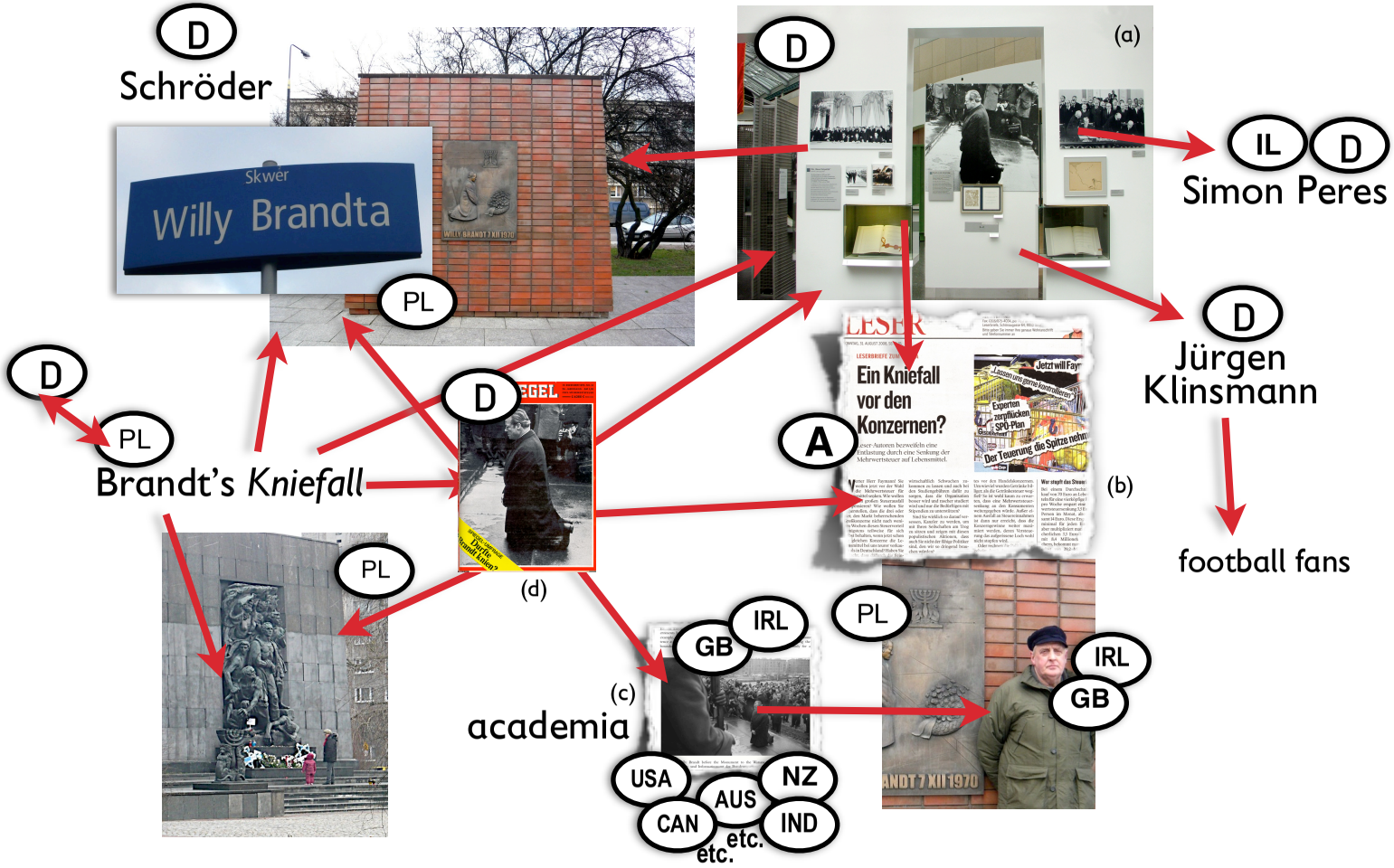

Fig. 1.1

The (partial) path of the cultural item of Willi Brandt's *Kniefall*.

Images © the author, except for (a) Wikimedia Commons (3.0) licence from user Holger.Ellgaard from http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Haus_der_Geschichte_2009b.jpg?uselang=de (b) ([n.d.] 2008b) (c) (Carrithers 2005b:580) (d) ([n.d.] 1971)

itself is used, reflecting how human life itself is lived. An alternative depiction of how rhetoric culture theory can be visually represented can be seen in Fig. 1.2. This diagram is Tyler's 'I-C-P model' (1978:137), taken up by the Rhetoric Culture Project (Strecker and Tyler 2009a:24-25).[8] A detailed explanation of the pragmatics-based analysis which Tyler engaged in during its original creation in 1978 is not necessary here, except to note briefly what it represents. The letters thereupon, I, C and P, refer to speakers' intentions, their competence and understanding of the *kairos*/situation-determined cultural items, and their performances and their results respectively. The future rhetoric depends on the past, the past on the future (note this chiasmus), as do the cultural items, as part of a corpus created. In some senses, there is no beginning and no end. The diagram is a valiant attempt to summarise what is almost impossible

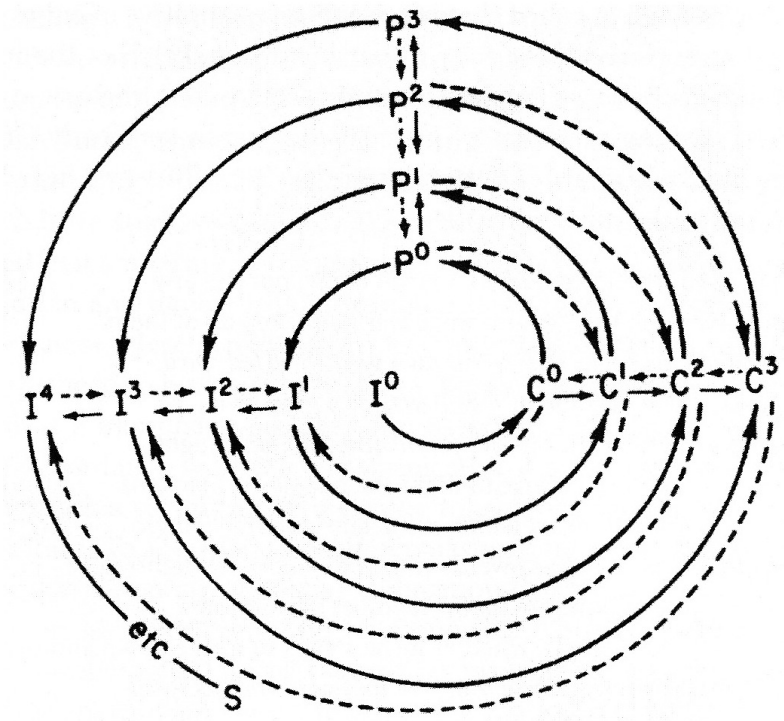

Fig. 1.2

Tyler's I-C-P model (cf. 1978:137), taken up by the Rhetoric Culture Project (shown in Strecker and Tyler 2009a:24-25).

[8] Indeed, it has even been used as a central part of its logo (Strecker et al. 2003).

to diagrammatically summarise. In this thesis, I will from time to time use diagrammatic representations, but prefer textual, nuanced description and analysis as the best option to show my ethnographic findings. I will also use photographs to attempt to capture the spirit of various situations. In any case, returning to Tyler's diagram, as Strecker and Tyler themselves state, the diagram, as a distillation of rhetoric culture itself, demonstrates the nature of cultures, which are

> interactive, autopoetic, self-organized configurations. They are emergent, instrumental adaptations characterized by rhythmic, sequential, oscillating iterations manifested as transitions in phase space where each state is new and all states are bound together by resonance, tuning and feedback. (Strecker and Tyler 2009a:25)

Living in this world of metanarratives, I think sociality and rhetoric culture provides a means of analysis of these narratives. Yet it focuses on the interaction of the meta with the micro by allowing us to analyse how narratives at different levels mingle, how cultural items come together and replicate and metamorphose. It does so by allowing us to trace the development of the narratives, of the trails of cultural items, of inferences and interactions – from far and wide both temporally and geographically. This might sound complex, and indeed Carrithers notes 'for ethnographers, [it] sets a high standard of achievement' in that merely describing structures is not sufficient, but we are required 'to go beyond that to their skilled use in one situation or another' (Carrithers 2005b:582). I would also suggest that our knowledge of many domains has to be wide to meet this challenge, just as it would be within the context of studying Eurasia as suggested by Hann. However, in this complex environment in which we study and also live, it is rather necessary.

The rhetoric of economics

Although this thesis deals with an economic topic, it is not a piece of classical economic anthropology. This thesis is inevitably concerned with the means in which the self-employed

manage to provision for their existential needs – and to prosper and expand if that occurs. What is equally, if not more, important in this piece of rhetoric-culture-based anthropology is the methods they employ to explain, describe, justify their actions alongside those employed within their daily lives – be it business or otherwise. In this section I discuss the most appropriate conception of the economy with which to do so. Indeed, the question of which particular view anthropologists should have of the economy has been heavily debated within the discipline over time. A particularly strong crystallisation of this is what has become known as the 'formalist-substantivist debate' which took place principally during the 1960s (Carrier 2009:16-20). The formalist account of the economy mirrored closely the variety most commonly practiced by the discipline of economics. In such a view, the market is 'modelled as a separate sphere, making up the whole of the economy, in which all goods are priced and available for exchange' (Gudeman 2001:5). Such models are populated with *homo œconomicus*, 'economic man', acting out of 'rational, self-interested behaviour affected little by social relations, thus evoking an idealized state not far from that of […] thought experiments' (Granovetter 1985:481). Such theories tend to regard governmental/political input as problematic. Those aspects where rhetoric could and would be prevalent, which Gudeman calls 'communal transactions', however, 'to the extent they exist or are recognized, represent irrationalities, frictions, hindrances, or "externalities" to a system that is otherwise efficient' (Gudeman 2001:6).

On the other side of this particular debate, the substantivists, following from the writings of Karl Polanyi (2001[1957], 1957) regard the economy as being embedded within society, rather than vice versa, and 'derives from man's dependence for his living upon nature and his fellows' and 'refers to the interchange with his natural and social environment' (Polanyi 1957:243). In order to do so, Polanyi 'chose to focus his analysis at the level of concrete institutions' (Block and Somers 1984:69), and further how the institutions are linked. From this, it seems that – provisionally at least – formalist neoclassical economics are not the ultimate theoretical tool to be employed within anthropology and that substantivist is much more suited to this task.

Indeed, as economic anthropologist Gudeman found on his first field research among Panamanian farmers, his intentions to apply market theories 'to explain their behavior in terms of rational choice and self-interest' (2001:2) lost their utility in light of his informants' bewildered reactions to his questions. Thus, it is reassuring that Nobel Prize-winner Stiglitz notes that within the discipline of economics, 'today, there is no respectable intellectual support for the proposition that markets, by themselves, lead to efficient, let alone equitable outcomes' (in Polanyi 2001[1957]:viii)

As Gudeman (2002), however, suggests, there are a further two approaches to the economy which anthropologists have employed for their analyses. The third of the options available is the Marxist historical materialist view which attempts to show how the interplay between the mode of production, class interactions and who owns the means of production. A Marxist analysis, however, offers an initially unsurmountable problem for the anthropologist in that its focus on material production is based in ever increasingly technologically-developed societies and how this technology leads to revolution. However, anthropologists of a historical materialist outlook have adapted this stance to less industrial societies, with, for example, Meillassoux (1981) substituting the classic 'productive forces' for the 'reproductive forces' where capital in the guise of offspring produced by women is the key to providing sufficient labour to enable adequate provisioning. However, given the fact that teleological narratives have been shown to be inadequate in postsocialist situations, and that, as Layton suggests, Marxism and its dialectic march through stages, where synthesis repeatedly follows the clash between thesis and antithesis towards 'true communism' also represents 'social change in a particular direction' (Layton 1997:10; cf. Hamilton 2010b:129-30) its adequacy as an analytical tool here is certainly questionable. Indeed, Polanyi criticised it in the same way as he did formalism as being too technologically deterministic (Block and Somers 1984:75-78). Yet, Polanyi himself has been criticised for being deterministic, but in his case too focused instead on institutions, explaining 'too little about the ways that material livelihood is in fact organized, and lacks a model of how the social and economic realms are joined' (Gudeman 2002:173).

Instead, for this thesis, I have chosen the fourth approach detailed by Gudeman, namely a broadly cultural economic standpoint, as it will be seen to be the most compatible with rhetoric culture itself. At the heart of this approach, Gudeman, the concept's main promoter, explains that which I suggest is the most useful basic premise of cultural economics thus: 'people everywhere model their ways of securing livelihood just as modern economists build models of the market economy' and 'often employ socially-close figures or human images to model material processes' (2002:173). For example, Bird-David found that hunter-gatherers view the forest which provides their material needs as something with which they 'share' (1992). Gudeman's own fieldwork (1978) was among Panamanian peasants who had to move away from traditional farming practices to a market economy. He found that in traditional farming 'when the land was seeded and the usufruct rights took effect, the terminology shifted and became humanized' (1986:5), for example, weeding took on the terminology of household cleaning. Further, certain agricultural, technical actions were expressed in tonsorial terms related to the human head. Conversely, market-destined sugar cane production although 'the physical movement was identical in the domestic and cash crops, […] in the cane this was called 'weeding' while in rice it was 'trimming the hair' (1986:18).

What is further important is the moral dimension this seems to suggest. Of course, anthropologists have been long interested in how certain economic (inter-)actions and means of provisioning are acceptable, while others are not (e.g. Scott 1976; Parry and Bloch 1989). As Pietilä notes, 'the view of money's disruptive effects on sociality has a long intellectual history that stretches back to Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, and Karl Marx', who 'condemned money, market exchange, and commodities on moral grounds, because they believed these caused the dissolution of communal bonds' (2007:42). There is thus clearly a moral dimension involved. However, other examples add a further and noteworthy layer to this. For Gudeman's Panamanian peasants, profit was to indeed be avoided and money only seen as acceptable 'in so far as it can procure items of use' for the production of staple foods – not to procure 'vices'

and 'luxuries' (1978:38-40). What makes this more interesting for a rhetorical culture analysis is the fact, as shown above in terms of the presence or absence of shaving metaphors, it is expressed metaphorically, with one domain using one set of richly figurative terms, the other a different, more mechanistic set. For a pronominal example, Verdery, found that during the infamous pyramid scheme episode in Romania, the possessive pronoun 'my money', representing moral, earned wages was contrasted with 'their money' earned from investments in the dubious schemes (1996:184-89). Further, Pietilä shows that, although a complex image is created due to the somewhat chaotic nature of the markets in Kilimanjaro, kinship terminology is invoked by entrepreneurs in order to personalise trading relationships and stave off criticism that profit is being made (2007:44-45).

This returns attention to the question of the self-employed, the subject of this thesis, in particular. Contending, correctly, that entrepreneurs are seen by others as 'the personal face of capitalism', Hart summarises the position of entrepreneurs – as seen by others – as either being its 'heroes', or rather more unkindly, 'villains who cruelly sacrifice the general interest to their personal greed or megalomania' (2000:97). Indeed, Hart himself found that the Frafras in Ghana, when entrepreneurs' profits 'are derived from outside or internal methods considered legitimate, little opprobrium may be incurred' and surplus profits made at the cost of others could be mitigated by drawing on the fact that the community will benefit later, such as through charity (ibid.:105). Equally important in the reputation of entrepreneurs was 'the destination of these surpluses and how the successful managed their relations with close kin and other members of the ethnic community' (ibid.:107). Here, there is a narrative dimension, in that imagined future events play an important part in the creation of morality. Thus, in sum, it can be seen from these examples that not only does economic morality exist, but that often it is expressed in rhetorical terms, in metaphors, through the creative use of pronouns, with a narrative dimension. All are used to create forms of local models, which at times may be quite removed from neoclassical 'Economics/business school' models. However, here once again there is an important point about the nature of these latter models themselves.

Wiseman's study of Lévi-Strauss's chiasmatic rhetoric in his writing, as well as mine in Hamilton (2010c) of a German postsocialist scholar's rhetorical performance in a discussion seminar, suggests that academic writing is as prone to rhetorical – in the sense of persuasion as to who is correct – usage as any other. In economic anthropology, the formulators and proponents seem to be (or no less importantly, described to be) in intellectual conflict with their opponents' theories. And, especially important here, as noted by Carrier (2009) during his attempt to show that the proponents in both sides of the formalist-substantivist used rhetoric to make their accounts more plausible and thus accepted, in his attempt to describe the simplifying rhetoric used, he himself must use the same basic technique to make his own account plausible. And he is 'only' analysing. The discipline of 'economics', one which in its applied form is used by both academic and governmental practitioners to predict future events, is likewise bound in rhetoric. If the reader imagines some version of a graph used, one axis is generally time-based, and the line is a narrative in itself. Indeed, McCloskey describes economic models as 'nonornamental metaphors' (1998:40).

This, however, is further massively complicated by the fact that the model based in neoclassical economics/formalism is not only that on which the 'West's' economy is modelled by those who attempt to manage it on a central government level. There are further complications involved. Firstly, recent developments in the global economy such as the late 2000s/early 2010s 'financial crisis' or 'credit crunch' show that history is not quite as near its end as Fukuyama (1992) thought. When in 2007 then-BBC economics editor Evan Davis posted his views on his blog about his prognosis for the national economy after the first signs of trouble ahead, one of the commenters posted that

> the world of the last 20 years has seen things happen that, to a classically trained economist, just shouldn't have happened. Logical, rational explanations have sometimes been hard to find, and I know that this makes it increasingly difficult for one to have the

> confidence to assert what is good and what is bad, what is right and what is wrong. (in Davis 2007)

The poster had much more surprising events ahead of him, as it turned out during the period of this thesis. In Germany, and in the UK, media articles wondered if Marx had been right all along, replacing one *telos* for another. It is, however, not only this sense that deterministic narratives are problematic in the face of events that is important here. An important nexus lies in the example described above: neoclassical economics are not the only concept involved.

This draws attention to the fact that these classical and Marxist economic models are based upon, and generally created by, Western theorists drawing upon their own cultural contexts. The debates surrounding them, likewise based thereupon and therein, pose a theoretical problem. This is compounded by the fact, to be shown in more detail in Chapter 3, that eastern Germany had as its state political and economic ideology something – Marxism-Leninism – which is semantically and conceptually similar to a theory whose original creator attempted to actively oppose the ideology wherefrom neoclassical economics issued forth. German reunification further compounds this as the economic and political policies closely identified with the neoclassic are imposed on the former Marxist. To add to the mix, it has been argued that Marx himself was an anthropologist, given his social theorising and interest in social structure and cultural change in diverse places through history (Patterson 2009). Thus, in eastern Germany, the potential for complexity when imposing an economic system upon a former state socialist territory is that the rhetoric-rich theory which inspired its former government also contained an important dimension pertaining to sociality and economic morality which is inextricable therefrom – theoretically. Yet, the fate of post-socialist narratives as noted at the outset should remind the anthropologist that nothing is simple and as expected. The results of the contention which can erupt, I show below, is no less. Therefore, in this thesis I adopt not only a model of economics which is based in rhetorical usage, and based in social relations, but show how 'Marxism' itself becomes a form of local model, but one which is not doctrinaire. It

further adapts to the situation involved – situation in the sense of eastern Germany in general, and 'situation' in the theoretical sense.

Personhood, and asking the questions

Employment is not only related to economics, but to personhood. As Linde notes, 'one's occupation is a publicly available piece of information, from which many inferences may be drawn as to what sort of person one is' (1987:346). It allows the anthropologist to gain information not only on how people provision for their needs, but shows how people view themselves as persons, and more broadly as persons in society. Besides this, sociality and rhetoric culture theory focuses greatly on persons for its analyses. This is not only related to its interest in situations. People feature in narratives, and pronouns very often – but not necessarily – refer to people. Equally, people themselves are often the subject of metaphorical actions. Indeed, the *homo œconomicus* of the neoclassical models is to all intents and purposes a person, a character in a story as fictional in practice as any which appears in a novel. And in terms of metaphor, Fernandez's discussion of the US attorney general being called a 'jelly fish' by the director of the FBI (1986) gives a very rich example of such a usage. Thus, here, in an anthropological sense, the concept of *personhood* is very important in understanding how not only the persons in those narratives and metaphors themselves imagine themselves within the cultural context of their situations. It is but also important in understanding how others conceive of those persons, and their relationships to them. However, overall, given the view expressed above that it is inadequate to view cultures or societies as unchanging, bounded wholes with a generalised view of the persons who belong thereto, it is unfortunate to note that a similar view has been taken on the concept of the person.

The origin of this view is in Mauss' 1938 lecture on the person, in an attempt to create a narrative of the development of the 'person' as a category throughout human history. His account does not focus on the 'self', or how the psychological individual experiences those

concepts. Rather, the account focuses on society-imposed 'law and morality' within the context of 'the notion or concept that men in different ages have formed of it' (1985[1938]:3). Mauss suggests this development, in summary, is a movement from the time of the 'personnage'– a role given through being attributed a name from a fixed set recycled from one's ancestors – towards the Western 'person'. This latter concept, the contemporary version, is culturally-prevalent in Western countries and their legal and commercial systems,. It is also embedded in international human rights law. Even if there are issues in constructing such an all-encompassing narrative from partial data, as Carrithers notes, 'we can still salvage a very important double insight' in that western societies in general do so. Further, there are other societies which likewise

> *as a matter of law and public ideology* place emphasis elsewhere, such as on the value of social relations and the fulfilment of social obligations specific to each role, e..g mother and wife, father and husband, dutiful son or daughter. (Carrithers 2002:421, original emphasis)

And, in this regard, ethnographic evidence provides many examples of this diversity, and a wide range of different conceptions of personhood have been suggested by anthropologists.[9] However, as it will be noted below, it is important to highlight that, as Carrithers' emphasis suggests, 'law and public ideology' are not always adhered to. Despite this, others have contended it is.

While Dumont (1980[1966]) argues that Indians place attention to society as a whole rather than individuals, Geertz has suggested that the Balinese invariably manage situations by regarding their fellow humans as virtual strangers who must be treated with *sang-froid* politeness at all times (1966). Geertz takes up Alfred Schütz's (1962, 1967) concept of '*Mitmenschen*' and '*Nebenmenschen*' and applies it to Bali. For Schütz, members of societies could view others either as 'contemporaries' ('Nebenmenschen') or 'consociates' ('Mitmenschen'). Contemporaries are persons who we do not intimately know, recognise as types, and treat in a

[9] For a more detailed overview, including the various varieties of personhood discussed below, see Carrithers (2002), and Fowler (2004), the latter for Melanesian and Indian examples in particular.

more distant manner reflecting that lack of personal knowledge. In comparison, consociates are those persons whom we actually know. Schütz defined the concept himself as follows:

> Living with my fellow men [a further translation of *Mitmenschen*], I directly experience them and their subjective experiences. But of my contemporaries we will say that, while living among them, I do not directly grasp their subjective experiences but instead infer, on the basis of indirect evidence, the typical subjective experiences they must be having. (A. Schütz 1967:142-43)

Geertz notwithstanding, this is a powerful concept to which this thesis often returns. However, at this juncture it is sufficient to note that Geertz views this as a fixed conception for the Balinese. Others have argued that Melanesian cultures have a conception of the person which is 'dividual' or 'partible'. In this latter scheme, parts of persons are detachable, may be gifted to others as part of social relations, and internalised by the receiver (Strathern 1988; see also Mosko 1992). Alongside this, the person may increase or decrease in scale as the relevant parts are added or removed from the person, and likewise for the person who receives. In a recent development, those who have been inspired by the Strathearnean vision of personhood have become interested in a complementary model, although one with a different origin. French philosopher Latour (2005) has suggested that societies are constructed of parts assembled together, and that persons themselves are but similarly parts assembled together depending on the tasks they are required to perform. There is a useful metaphorical dimension to this, and in Chapters 3 and 4 I will return to this point. However, I also suggest it has its limits and that there is much more involved.

Above, when considering how sociality and rhetoric culture theory is a valid means to model culture and cultural change, there was an emphasis on the ability to account for and trace change. Models which do not appreciate the possibility that change can occur were thus appropriately criticised. This is, however, a criticism that can be applied to the overwhelming majority of the models mentioned in this section. Carrithers (2000) criticised Mauss, Dumont and Geertz for their view that personhood models are universal – not in the sense that they

apply everywhere but equally problematically within the cultures and societies themselves they suggest the particular models are said to occur. For example, whereas Geertz suggests that Balinese persons *all* possess the same type of personhood, Wikan (1990) shows using the example of a grieving widow who (a) acts in the outwardly and thus internally stoical way suggested by Geertz, is also (b) understood by the reactions of her friends to be suffering from grief and (c) thus treated by her friends in an appropriately sympathetic manner (cf. Carrithers 2000). A further criticism is that these models are also fixed in the sense of allowing for change. This is expressed through describing how an eastern German woman (to whom I return in Chapter 4) modifies her sense of personhood as social change occurs during and after the move towards a market economy after reunification. It is here, for the purposes of introducing the theoretical basis for this thesis, where the narrative arc is reunited with the beginning. It is this which allows the broad research questions for this thesis to be posed overpage, and set the framework for what follows as I test the theory in eastern Germany:

WHEREAS there has been broad ranging change in postsocialist societies,

AND WHEREAS eastern Germany is one such society,

AND WHEREAS sociality and rhetoric culture theory posits that social change occurs,

AND WHEREAS rhetoric is seen to be the driving force and the means of explaining that change:

1. **To what extent can rhetoric be seen in the process of creating, modifying and dealing with events within the lives of persons living in eastern Germany?**

If this is the case,

WHEREAS economic activity and modelling is seen to be not only as prone to rhetorical effort as any other domain but particularly prone thereto in various domains,

AND WHEREAS the economy has been a main area of change in eastern Germany alongside social change,

AND WHEREAS personhood is also prone to change,

AND WHEREAS (as shown in later chapters) that eastern Germany was said to have on an official level a different sense of personhood to the system it adopted after reunification,

AND WHEREAS self-employment (as will be seen in later chapters) to be incompatible with the socialist sense of personhood, but likewise admired in the capitalist system which replaced it

AND WHEREAS the sense of personhood in socialist times had a long period to become established:

2. **Which rhetorical items, techniques and schemes are employed by the self-employed in eastern Germany to describe their choices and activities given their seeming incompatibility with the long-embedded sociality and conception of personhood of the past?**

In order to answer these questions, after having discussed the methodology I used in doing so in **CHAPTER 2,** as well as the ethical and practical issues involved, I move on to more ethnographically-substantive matters as follows:

CHAPTER 3 The following chapter allows me to introduce the situation in which I completed my fieldwork, on various levels. I present the various processes through which Halle and its *Bundesland* of Saxony-Anhalt, as part of broader trends within eastern Germany, suffered marked socio-economic deprivation since reunification. Further, I show how the development of the economic base which these processes have eroded, combined with GDR-era political ideology, created a situation whereby work in collective acts became imbued with moral value which in turn reflected on peoples' sense of personhood. I suggest that in light of such a situation, self-employment is a particularly interesting means of provisioning one's needs given the seeming economic, moral and ideological incompatibility of such practices with the past. Given SRC's sense of change, and that narratives in the present may be affected by those from the past, or that those from the past may be used in the creation of contemporary narratives, these date from the GDR period as well as the current. However, due to the importance of peoples' own experiences in the creating their narratives, I focus on sources which I found during my fieldwork – not only in academic publications, but those I encountered in second-hand bookshops, on internet auction sites, as well as the built environment. By so doing I show how both texts from the past and present can play an important role in current descriptions of a city and its people, as well as their working lives.

In **PART 2**, I move focus to current events I experienced during my fieldwork:

CHAPTER 4 Given the multiple levels of discourse on which rhetoric can function, after having concentrated on documents and the media in the previous chapter, I continue this by considering the contemporary presentation of how the self-employed person is rhetorically created in manuals and pamphlets encouraging people to become self-employed, and to give them advice. Recognising that individual successful persons are one of the main rhetorical means of creating self-employed people, in the dual sense of adding to their numbers, and of shaping their personhood once created, I show how these are carefully tailored to an eastern public in publications targeted especially to them. I then show how this is sustained in training courses. However, I demonstrate that this message of neoliberal business expansion is tempered by

CHAPTER 5

eastern Germans who, while accepting it as necessary, create a 'global assemblage' of a more consocial-tinted mode of self-employment. Based on the findings I present in this chapter I begin to introduce the concept of a 'consociational personhood' I suggest is visible as an ideal among eastern Germans.

In this chapter, focussing more on the experience of a selection of Halle-based self-employed people, I present the rhetorical means through which they describe and justify their economic practices. Presenting the 'life stories' of these persons as told to me in the more informal space which interviews represent, I show that while business skills are valued, I highlight how this can be happily juxtaposed with criticism of capitalism expressed in the terms of Marxist political and economic rhetoric. I go on to show, however, that there is a great deal of importance placed on social solidarity above all. I move on to suggest this is further evidence of the existence of a 'consociational personhood'.

In **PART 3**, I move focus to a sector in which economic precariousness is particularly noticeable, that of the freelance product promoter.

CHAPTER 6

In this chapter I introduce the task of the freelance product promoter, based on ethnographic experience of spending time with such persons, including personal experience of having worked as a promoter alongside them. Suggesting that the task of advertising a product is deeply rhetorical, I show that the narrative techniques which I have introduced above are particularly marked here. Using them is not only key to the task, but as a means of being successful in this particularly competitive and insecure sector. I highlight that being especially proficient in using these tools is an efficient and powerful means of guaranteeing survival. I show further that the values associated with the 'consociational personhood' are likewise expressed by product promoters, and that by appearing as more of a consociate than a contemporary this has great value in the task of remaining successful.

CHAPTER 7

After having presented the rhetorical skills of a more verbal variety used by product promoters in the previous chapter, in this I move on to highlight how rhetoric can be expressed in terms of practice and material items. I show how product promoters use the items companies provide them for the purposes of promoting, for their own purpose of creating sociality among themselves, as well as enhancing their appearance of consociality towards their customers. I show how these 'mass-gifts' (Bird-David and Darr 2009a, b) are used to recreate the social relations of the workplaces of the GDR period, and this further highlights how rhetoric from the past can often creatively appear in use in the present.

In **PART 4**, before moving on to draw final conclusions in **CHAPTER 9**, attention returns to the question of the presentation of Halle itself:

CHAPTER 8

In this chapter I show how the city of Halle's administration uses persons as symbolic rhetorical means to improve the negative impression that the town has seen built up since reunification. I show how it tries to neutralise one negative personification in the form of a 'Grey Diva' by recasting itself as a 'Händelstadt', the town of birth of its most famous former citizen. After showing how these efforts are debated and contentious, I show how the city administration also uses images of local self-employed people in much the same symbolic way. I move on to show how those self-employed people themselves are also creative in their use of Halle's symbols, including Händel, but also reclaim the Diva in efforts not only to sell their products, and thus attempt to improve the city's perceived self-image as well. In the efforts of both the town's administration and its self-employed people, I also show how the values connected to the 'consociational personhood' are once again very much to the fore.

2 Methodology

Methods, reflexivity and ethics

Initial reflections

I lived in Halle an der Saale from February 2008 to August 2009. I chose Halle as a fieldwork site because it represented a place which had a relatively average-sized population (still large but not one of Germany's largest), was a university town while having an industrial heritage, and was geographically towards the centre of Germany, and of eastern Germany itself. It thus represented a place which was not particularly near an external border, was neither an economic nor cultural 'growth pole' nor a city lacking in the facilities which a city of a similar size elsewhere in Germany would possess. Therefore, it was a town I felt representative enough in which to conduct this study. Further, during my time in Halle I had the opportunity to meet and interact with a relatively diverse set of persons, which was most instructive for the purposes of this research.

However, thinking more narrowly of those who gave of their time for activities exclusively dedicated to providing me with data, e.g. in interviews, I must first express particular gratitude. Although anthropologists are always indebted to others for their participation in their studies, those non-salaried persons who are self-employed in a capitalist society might be described as particularly benevolent. For the self-employed person, time spent being interviewed, for example, is time not working and thus not earning. This potential loss of earning means that for various reasons – not least the ethical – direct contact tends to be short and fleeting, and

often non-recurring. In this section I detail and reflect upon the characteristics of the fieldwork methods used in such a situation, and of the composition of the 'sample' of persons with whom I either merely spoke or spent longer periods. I consider how one critically informed the other, and of the benefits and disadvantages of the resulting combination. I suggest that, despite some caveats, this limited time situation was not detrimental to the validity of my research, but rather enhanced it in various ways. In the following chapter I will give much more detail on Halle an der Saale itself, yet here I will give some hints of the city and region's socio-economic situation which on one hand make it particularly interesting as a place for research. On the other, however, this also raises some particular problems on both practical and positional levels. Alongside this, I introduce the factors – practical and personal – which affected the course of the research. Further, I also detail the ethical issues involved and the measures taken to ensure this research met accepted standards of professional conduct.

Finding people

One of the issues which became clear early in the fieldwork process was that data protection legislation precluded what could have represented the most simple means of meeting informants.[10] It was made clear by officials at the so-called '*ARGE*' (combined employment and benefits centres, administered together by local and central government, cf. JobCentre Plus in the UK) whom I met at an information day for potential start-ups at their local office complex that neither they, nor other organisations, could provide simple lists of persons who had made use of their funding or training facilities.[11] Despite these legal strictures, it must be clearly stated that I did, however, receive much assistance from such bodies. I was given access to training courses and seminars, as well as the event mentioned above. Although courses and

[10] This term is not ideal, given the negative connotations which the term may have in its wider societal use. However, I employ it in this thesis due to its traditional usage within the discipline. I prefer to imagine the term in its sense of people who indelibly 'informed' my research experience and without whose generous contributions I would not have been able to complete it.

[11] Schefold, who did research on the unemployed in Halle, faced similar issues with 'bureaucratic restrictions' which prevented her from participant observation within that institution, as well as provisions of contacts (cf. 2008).

seminars were often cancelled due to lack of interest from potential participants, they did provide one avenue for meeting self-employed start-ups with whom I could make contacts. Although this may outwardly represent the somewhat negatively-overtoned 'haphazard sampling' (Bernard 2006:191-92), in such circumstances it proved to be worthwhile, and opened opportunities for engaged learning and interviewing. Further, in certain cases it facilitated 'chain referral', otherwise known as 'snowball sampling' (Bernard 2006:192-94). The low frequency of such events, and the limited numbers of persons that I as an attendee could actually converse with meant that other means of finding informants was required.

Like any other resident in a large Western city, the ethnographer is surrounded by large numbers of providers of goods and services who satisfy their material and social needs. For me, resident in Halle, this was also the case. However, they were equally useful for me as an anthropologist searching for informants, as this also proved to be a very beneficial means of locating participants. On regular, almost daily, walks around the neighbourhood or town I attempted to spot newly-opened businesses, and then approached them for research purposes. In a similar vein, persons with whom I was in a merely commercial relationship at first, over time, became interviewees. For example, my local – personal – hairdresser was happy to be interviewed. An opportunistic sampling strategy, of being in the right place at the right time, was also beneficial. For example, as I note in Chapter 3, my attendance at the commercial *Ostalgie* ('nostalgia for the GDR') event mentioned in that chapter and in Hamilton (2010c) provides an example. It allowed me to meet one of the self-employed freelance product promoters who features heavily in that part's chapters, as it in turn facilitated ongoing participant observation, as well as friendship. Such contacts also generated further chain referral, particularly interesting when viewing how the self-employed interact with and view one another.

Whereas being 'at large' within the town played an undoubtedly important role, the benefits of the media to this research – whether printed or online – cannot be underestimated. From the

beginning I created a collection of various articles from the local, regional and national press, as well as other documentary sources. Articles which were paper-based were scanned and then recycled. Newspaper or local online news fora, whether in the form of advertising or articles on events, are remarkably vital to a rhetorical culture study as I demonstrated in the previous chapter, and will continue to do so throughout this thesis. Firstly, in a world of public culture, these mediated sources have a massive influence. One informant told me that when he spoke with the older man downstairs, he could detect ideas or phrases in his speech taken from the (local edition of the) mass-circulation national *Bild-Zeitung* newspaper. However, these mediated sources also provided not only notification of interesting happenings in the business world, sales events or new start-ups, but how these were viewed by the wider community. Further, the local university operated a training and mentoring scheme for start-ups, which operated a website. Thereon they designated a '*Gründer des Monats*' (start-up of the month) who had been successful in some way, and this was also a means of identifying participants.

The mention of success, however, does raise an important source of potential weakness in the 'sample', which might result in a more positive impression of the experience of being self-employed than is the overall case. This results from the simple fact that it is much easier to encounter success than failure. This does not mean that there is no failure around. Officially, 680 bankruptcies were recorded in Halle during 2008, of which 78 and 138 were businesses and self-employed persons respectively (Stadt Halle/Saale 2009:107).[12] Evidence of this can be seen both in the built environment and in the media, as I will show particularly in Chapter 8. Put simply, a successful business is there, a terminally unsuccessful business is not. If it vanishes physically from its location, then tracing its former operators is somewhat difficult. For example, I approached a newly-opened hairdresser near to my house in the weeks after it opened, but in the short time between my first and follow-up visits, it had closed. Further, the restaurant guide on the local news website HalleForum.de lists forty-four entries in a 'closed' category, in the same way they list 'Italian' or 'Thai' ([n.d.] 2009c). However, the increasing

[12] Although this figure seems high, this is part of a downward trend.

emptiness of commercial premises on the upper section of the Leipziger Strasse (called the '*Boulevard der Pleiten*' or 'bankrupts' boulevard' in the *Bild*)[13] (U. Freitag 2009a) does certainly not go unnoticed, and seen as something in need of 'rescuing', for example, by the local chocolate factory owner (U. Freitag 2009e) Yet, here, some sense of positive thinking towards improving the situation can be readily detected, and reflects the positivity the self-employed themselves exhibit through becoming self-employed. As will be seen below, the desire to improve one's life is often quoted as a justification for so doing. In this sense it is undoubtedly thought-provoking and significant ethnographically to see how this can be successfully achieved through rhetorical action, in such an unquestionably economically disadvantaged area .

Interacting with people, once found

From the days of Małinowski, participant observation has been the favoured method of data collection within the task of ethnography. In this vein, it has been described by Bernard as 'the foundation of cultural anthropology', and its main benefit is that 'it puts you where the action is and lets you collect data' (Bernard 2006:343-44). It is true that spending time doing things along with people in the process of 'engaged learning' (Carrithers 2005a:437) was an important part of my fieldwork in Germany. In terms of the 'traditional' style of data gathering, I spent some days promoting wine, for example, alongside informants (cf. Chapters 6 and 7 in Part 3). I visited them regularly in other locations to watch their customer interactions, including one trip watching how a key informant and his friend did their normal jobs when in western Germany rather than Halle. I was able to visit or stay overnight with some informants to see how and in which conditions they lived (see also Chapter 5). However, given the potentially sensitive nature of the topic under investigation, it was necessary to build up some rapport and show common interest over time before such could occur, especially given the potential sensitive

[13] Translations of quotations from ethnographic sources and scholarly works originally in the German language are the author's, unless otherwise stated.

nature of the topic involved. In this sense, getting to such a point took investment, and much time, given the intermittent contact I could have with highly mobile and busy businesspeople.

In light of such circumstances, I felt I could interact in relatively deep contact with more people using outwardly relatively formal (semi-structured) interviews rather than relying on traditional participant observation alone. I conducted 36 such interviews, with 30 in Halle directly, and four elsewhere in the region, plus a further two in Austria as a means of comparison. These were outwardly semi-structured, with a core set of questions accompanied with some more specific to the particular circumstances. They took place in offices, bars and cafés (including as workplaces), on one occasion a vineyard, in shops, people's homes (including mine for one interview). Some were one-on-one, or with more than one person present. Sometimes, in workshops, shops or cafés, they could be interrupted by customers (of the location, or of the interviewees themselves) and the interactions could then be observed. In many senses, my interviews were embedded in social lives themselves. In this stance, I follow the position taken by Hockey (2002) who argues that interviews are also places where participant observation takes place. Noting that 'a series of stand-alone interviews are often regarded as the poor relation or handmaiden of a participant-observation study', she however highlights the 'parallels between interviewing and "real life"' (2002:210). Rather than merely 'an off-stage commentary which takes place in the wings', she suggests that 'in many respects the interview is an encounter which resembles many others in societies where important relationships can have a "disembodied quality", being conducted in bounded slots' (2002:215). Although I return to this point in more detail in Chapter 5, this broadly reflects the experience of my fieldwork interviews, where the meeting as means of gaining advice from an advisor, applying to a funding body or bank for money, or meeting new potential customers takes place in physical and interpersonal circumstances resembling the research interview. Evidence for this sense of embeddedness came, for example, when one informant brought her CV along! Further, when interviewing a hairdresser, the interactions took place in the back room where coffee breaks

were spent. During the process, word came that a sales representative from a salon products company had arrived to speak to her, and this would likewise take place in the back room.

In addition to this sense of embeddedness, interviews are also a means to discover how businesspersons talk to other 'professionals'. Doctoral candidates in Germany are not classified as 'students', but a separate category of professional junior researcher. In addition, when asking a financial advisor what it is like to start a business, there is a certain parallel to the real potential self-employed person so doing, especially given the pressure from university administrators to become 'entrepreneurs'.[14] In such cases, however, 'we', the start-up and the anthropologist, are both non-experts going to gain business-skills information from an expert. Further, these experts had access to many more of the events, and to many more of the persons, to whom I would ideally liked to have spoken. Given the difficulty in locating 'failure' noted above, they represented one way of learning about those who did not succeed in their ventures. In general advisors had attended many more of the events, and spoken to many more of the people, which I was attempting to do in my research. In this way, they represent a source of 'para-ethnography', as elaborated from Holmes and Marcus (2005). In situations such as many I faced – dealing with expert officials, instructors, advisors and in limited time-slots and with reduced access possibilities – those experts can be regarded as more than merely 'natives' or 'experts' in the traditional sense. Rather, to the extent they also provide ethnographic-like accounts of their experiences, they can be 'treated "like" collaborators or partners in research' (Holmes and Marcus 2005:208) due to their broader experience and expertise. However, Holmes and Marcus point to the danger of 'indulging the "go native" option' (2005:249) within the ontological worlds of the experts. Boyer (2008) likewise points to the difficulties in deciding whose epistemology is more valid, especially in the case of professional experts who might also be involved in theory-building and analysis. For professionals, he also highlights the 'strong tendency towards [...] *politeness*', which is 'not always friendly or affirmative, but there are certain questions which are just not

[14] Indeed, on one occasion I was almost persuaded to set up my own company!

asked' (2008:43, original emphasis). Boyer also provides a five-point manifesto for engaging with professional experts. The first is to 'engage the non-professional', the final to 'humanise the expert!' (2008:44-45). This study does both of these tasks.

Reflecting upon the researcher

Anthropologists, in reflexive mode, have commented on the propensity of the experiences of one's own biography in shaping their impressions of their fieldsites (cf. the many examples in Okely and Callaway 1992, among others). The focus on personhood in this thesis, and on the sociality and consociality of human life means that it is very clear that in all the analyses, the anthropologist/analyst (me) is one of those involved in that sociality. And as Cohen notes, 'if we accept anthropology is an essentially interpretative exercise, it must be clear that interpretation cannot begin from a *tabula rasa*' (Cohen 1992:223). In terms of analytical abilities issuing forth from that experience, he also suggests that our ethnography 'must use all the resources of sense-making open to us' (ibid.). Naturally, there are things lacking in my biography which affect that too and my lack of expertise in business and money-making was clear. Entering many situations reminded me of Rapport's (1992) recounting of his relationships with his informants. Although my family background is not particularly wealthy, by dint of being a doctoral candidate the anthropologist is already prone to an appearance of bourgeois privilege which university education has crafted. In a city where working class identity and presence was and is so common (see following chapter), I wondered if at times, like Rapport I could be seen as having the 'traits of weakness, short-sightedness and ignorance' (1992:201) which he had been ascribed as a result of his urbanity, and perhaps me as a result of my education. However, at other times, this was an advantage, and would contend that the image of Okely's informant's surprised delight at her, as an academic, milking cows (1992:7) resembled my experiences when, for example, successfully promoting wine I always feared the opposite.

There were aspects of my past academic career outside anthropology which did particularly aid my fieldwork. Before going to Halle, as a student/researcher I have focused on German-ness for a large part of my academic career. I have a modern languages degree in French and German, as well as having lived and worked in a German-speaking country (Austria) prior to undertaking this research. To get the degree, it was necessary to do so. Roberts et al. (2001) have suggested that ethnographic methods are vital in language learning, as part of compulsory time spent abroad, in what Phipps calls 'a gift from anthropology to modern languages' (2010:99). I found that in any case, by learning the language, and spending time away, that this did not only help in analysing wider German themes, history, but facilitated communication in Halle through my language skills. In some senses, as Phipps also shows when describing how her language learning and associated way of experiencing living in a place which uses that language (which she calls 'languaging'), improved her ethnographic skills, it is a gift given back. However, I would not suggest that I was 'at home' by any means.

In the following chapter I will demonstrate how that even today, western and eastern Germans often maintain relatively negative mutual stereotypes. In Hamilton (2010a) I demonstrated how these can quickly lead to rhetorical conflict and over things which might seem comparatively uncontentious to outsiders. In terms of the practicalities and access, I wondered if at times mistrust of outsiders hindered it in some ways. In the following chapters I also refer to the phenomenon of westerners coming to Halle to give dubious advice to, or even misappropriate from, easterners. Resultingly, the risk of mistrust was elevated. Indeed, the local adult education institution, the *Volkshochschule*, seemed most reluctant to put me in contact with the teacher of a cancelled course on business because, as I was told in a face-to-face meeting with the section administrator, of problems in the past of people attempting to use such contacts to sell their products. However, my earlier studies of German and experience abroad also meant that prior knowledge of the engrained east/west stereotypes was unavoidable and made me slightly trepidatious at times. Even when not dealing with 'professional experts' I suggest the issue of 'politeness' as highlighted by Boyer stretches much further, especially in a society like

the former GDR. Further, my Northern Irish upbringing has made me acutely aware, from personal experience, that where people from these two identities are closely mixed together, 'politeness', of agreeing with your interlocutor to avoid conflict is often the easier option.

While I do admit to agreeing with people on trains to avoid conflict, as presented in Adorno's *Minima moralia*, I suggest this does not represent 'treachery', nor that pleasantness to others is 'a naked mask for the implicit acceptance of inhumanity' (Adorno 1980[1951]:26-27). What it did mean, though, was that I was not particularly keen to explicitly mention the GDR unless it was already a theme in an interaction. This results from the Northern Irish experience of the grating religion question when someone discovers you hail from that place. Likewise, in a German context, Fig. 2.1 shows the frustrations of easterners who complain why they are always painted badly by the press. This does not mean, as I shall show below, that eastern

Fig. 2.1

'Financial crisis, unemployment, baby murder… Always the Ossis! Must the GDR really always get the blame for every ill?' *Berliner Kurier*, 28 February 2008 ([n.d.] 2008a)

Germans do not criticise their own cities, likewise the eastern German press. However, from an outsider, this can be problematic. Academics have been blamed for such activities too. An example hails from the press and municipal reaction to a large government-funded sociological and anthropological project in a different eastern German town, Wittenberge. An editorial in the *Märkische Oderzeitung*, for example, criticises the project for spending €1.7 million on discovering that the town was in decline, when just looking at unemployment and population figures could tell that. Further, it comments, 'Wittenberge is – as a result of the study – officially branded as a poor town. That is anything but motivating' (Wendt 2010). It is something which can be easily understood.

This sense of academics coming in and being criticised for negative portrayals of their study site reminds me of various things from Northern Ireland, and not least an episode of BBC Northern Ireland's most popular comedian of the 1970s. In the hour-long episode, English social scientists are lampooned for their ineptitude in trying and failing to understand the origins and intricacies of the then-current conflict, and accused of costing the taxpayer plenty (Young and BBC Northern Ireland 2005). This phenomenon of the 'Irish public's occasionally vituperative reaction to anthropology' (Taylor 1996:215) itself is likewise noted by anthropologists themselves. In this vein, Wilson and Donnan highlight, among other examples, the experiences of researchers such as Scheper-Hughes who, when returning to her fieldsite many years after writing her controversial thesis about its mental health issues 'was all but shunned and expelled' (Wilson and Donnan 2006:171). Taylor (1996, 2003) suggests that the Irish can be remarkably self-ironic – somewhat confirmed by the comedy programme above in which the 'natives' appear equally idiotic as the investigators. Taylor notes that one of his informants once wryly commented that '"there are two things people don't like to hear about themselves; one of them is the lies and the other's the truth"' (Taylor 1996:213). I would not by any means accuse eastern Germans of possessing no sense of humour, but being at the cutting edge of 'helpful' efforts by outsiders to 'solve' one's problems, which cannot clearly (perhaps) be solved by the 'natives' does rankle. From a Northern Irish context, it is clearly the 'truth' that there is

one unavoidable thing in inter-community conflict and violence which forms the main basis of our 'interestingness' for outsiders. In eastern Germany, its socio-economic deprivation and GDR-era history cannot be ignored. However, I felt it ethically better to let my informants decide to mention it or not. As will be seen in later chapters, they very often did of their own account. Given my avoidance of doing so, it adds to the ethnographic validity.

Ethical considerations

It is clear, given not only this potential sensitive representation of eastern Germany but also that people's livelihoods are being exposed to a very public audience, particular sensitivity was very important during this research. In this vein, I carried out the fieldwork and analysis as aware of the various 'political' issues as I felt I could be, and this was an iterative process. Further, it was carried out under the ASA 'Ethical Guidelines for Good Research Practice' (ASA 1999). Alongside this, it was submitted and received approval from the Ethics Committee of Durham University Department of Anthropology. I was required by the Committee to give persons with whom I conducted interviews participation information sheets, which I also handed out to people when I invited them for interview, or spoke to for long periods at events (cf. Appendix 1). These also contained information on how to contact my supervisor for further information on the research. This was a bilingual document. Further, I was required to give those persons my university business cards to give them an additional means of contacting me. I was also required by the Committee to maintain a webpage on the university server from which the information sheet could be downloaded again if necessary. This was also created to provide evidence that I was indeed a member of the university and thus *bona fide*. In keeping with the guidelines, and the guarantees given in the information sheet, consent to participate was received when this was appropriate (e.g. for interview participants). Participants were free to withdraw consent. Further, unless specifically waived by the research participants in question, I have anonymised (for example, by changing names, or obscuring faces in photographs where necessary) the persons who feature in this work. I also made certain

participants aware that – as ASA guidelines note – at times people may be very readily identifiable by dint of their particular position. In such cases, when these people appear in this thesis, I have referred to their actions and cited their comments with particular care. Further, and in keeping with current efforts to conduct ecologically-sound research, I travelled to and from the field by rail. This was matched by my almost exclusive use of public transport (including car sharing) while there.

Post-submission *post scriptum*

After I had submitted this thesis for examination, I travelled to Germany and spent a few days in Halle. Due to feelings that it is uncomfortable to be in intimate contact with people at the time that they are being written about, and due to communication issues, I had not been in much contact with Halle since I had left after fieldwork. Over time, I had begun to feel embarrassed about my lack of communication with old friends. I, therefore, did not announce my arrival lest this be seen as some audacious request for accommodation etc. Although I had not arranged to do so in advance, I decided, once there, to telephone old friends (who appear in this thesis) and was welcomed very warmly. As well as these particular friends, I further attempted to show as many people as I could in the limited time how they themselves appear in this thesis, and to précis what I had written. On account of the fact I could not contact everyone, I will not reveal any reactions. Once this thesis is finally submitted, after a certain period has elapsed, it will become available, free-of-charge on an open-access basis, on Durham University Library's e-Theses online repository at etheses.dur.ac.uk. In any case, it is a positive development that the general public have access to academic productions. Further, it is generally a worthwhile and ethically apposite step to show and explain to those who appear in those productions how they appear within them. I wish I had planned that step in advance and had been more successful in my efforts to talk to more people when in Halle.

3 Halle's 'situation'

An ethnography of public representations of city, work and personhood through time

Learning from 'ghosts in the city'

Only on one occasion have I attempted to pass through the Berlin Wall, at the Sebastian Straße ([n.d.] 2009a) checkpoint. Unfortunately the powers that be would not let me through, and I was sent back into the Federal Republic with a firm verbal indication that 'this is private property and trespass is not allowed!' This declaration of ownership rights in a capitalist idiom perhaps betrays that the scene did not take place in 1989 or before, during the GDR-era. Rather, it was on 11 March 2009 in Halle, where Landsberger Straße meets Reideburger Straße. The checkpoint, which can be seen in Fig. 3.1, rather than a relic from the GDR past, had been built as part of a film set. Alongside a GDR supermarket, café, and other parts of wall, it was one of a number I had seen around the city, put in place for the filming of *Liebe Mauer* – released in English with a very adequately-translated title of *Beloved Berlin Wall*. According to someone I spoke to in Halle, the city had become a favourite with directors of films set in the GDR because its socialist-era architecture and lack of urban regeneration in large parts of the urban environment since 1989 meant it could be easily used for filming. It was reported in the press that there were many public visitors to these sets, confirmed by my own experience. In an article entitled '*Halle's wall tourists*' in the local edition of the national mass tabloid *Bild*, 'vox-pops' by visitors appear with photographs. One stands out. A Winfried and Gabriele Marx from Halle, both in their early 60s, note that 'we would never have photographed ourselves in front of the real Wall. We are now making up for it, so we can recall that all later' (U. Freitag 2009b).

Fig. 3.1

Film-set version of the Berlin Wall, Halle, 2009 – private property!

Aside from the surely coincidental link existing in the names of the interviewees with the official ideology of the state which built the original Wall, the idea that the set – a physical recreation of a past object of large significance – can aid in producing knowledge, or allowing it to be retained is a significant point. De Certeau and Giard (1998) have likened old buildings to 'ghosts in the city' which, renovated as 'national heritage', help to create narratives about the city's past amidst urban regeneration. Here, however, the building is a recreation from elsewhere. Despite this, Halle's own old buildings, by dint of *not* being renovated, allow those who see them to create memories and narratives of the past. De Certeau has also suggested that 'walking in the city' like other everyday practices through which people themselves and their experiences create narratives of their interactions with it (1984:91-110). In this chapter, where I aim to describe Halle, its sense of personhood, and work, both before, during and after the GDR-period, I suggest that the walking, and seeing old buildings, is not where the story ends.

It is true that the physical environment plays its part in creating our impressions of a place, and our place within it. However, there are other means. Frau and Herr Marx lived long enough during the GDR, and after it, in Halle, to have some sense of its history. They could, I suspect, easily describe it. A younger native-born resident could too. Alongside their own experiences , they would have been told stories by their parents about the city and their place within its life. Other stories would have been told at school or by friends, or the press. My own experiences are much shorter. I am not a native-born resident. I must rely on other sources. As an ethnographer; I can ask others, and I have. As an academic, I am supposed to consult scholarly literature, which I have. However, given that much of the history of the area (academic or not) has been written by local people pre-, during, and post GDR, it is a fascinating source as ethnographic as well as factual data, as I demonstrate below. However, I suggest these sources are not enough for the ethnographer. As people experience their city by their walking around, what they experience must be taken into account. As a resident, I did this too. It is indeed the case that Halle is replete with 'ghosts in the city'. Fig. 3.2 shows one of the examples where GDR-era daily life can still meet the gaze of the ethnographer, resident and resident/ ethnographer. In this chapter in particular, and also throughout this thesis, examples abound. Images from the past crop up, as when a 2011 flood uncovered a host of old propaganda

Fig. 3.2
'Shit signs!' is the graffito-based comment on this former 'Road System Halle District Management People's Own Company' sign, 2009.

posters in a municipal leisure facility, which means they, and the connotations of their content, are discussed and related to current events in an online forum ([n.d.] 2011–).

While these examples can provide information, and knowledge of people's opinions of their city, there is another level. Most people do not consult academic publications to create their impressions of a city. If they want further information, today they use the Internet, or may consult books as in the past. However, given the ideological break when Halle moved metaphorically from GDR to Federal Republic, these older texts do not appear in standard bookshops. However, they do appear in the '*Antiquariaten*', the second-hand sellers' shops. In a linkage of past and modernity, I also used eBay to purchase old documents, and coincidentally discovered my main source of books and pamphlets lived not 100 metres away – saving postage costs as I could collect them personally from the seller! In any case, if a book appears twenty years after reunification in such a bookshop, or on such auction websites, I suggest that this is a sign of their importance. The larger the number owned by people, the better the survival rate. The larger the number owned by people, and perused by them, the larger the importance in their lives. The larger the importance in their lives, the larger the importance in creating their impressions of their city. This also applies to the old books which appeared from time to time, sitting on boxes on the street, offered for free to passersby, presumably as a dwelling is cleared or renovated. Alongside these are old party pamphlets and leaflets. Often these books and documents have annotations by the owners, further signs of importance within their professional and/or personal interests.

As I suggested in Chapter 1, the importance of the past is vital in understanding the present, as narratives created today are created using cultural items which appeared in the narratives of the past. This chapter aims to answer the question, as this thesis requires, of how someone given the task, using sources at hand, would answer when asked to described Halle. Given the sensitivity in describing Halle mentioned in the previous chapter, and which will be further detailed in this, I present how people from Halle and Saxony-Anhalt have done so, as well as

those from outside the region. In this way, it not only imparts information necessary to understand the rhetorical 'situation' in which my research takes place, but does so ethnographically, allowing the people themselves take centre stage in the situation. In so doing, I show how the town, its economic activity, and its decline, have helped create and to modify the sense of personhood which people Halle has been suggested, and shown, to possess. I also consider the *ways* this has been done. It will be seen that Halle is a very apt place for a study which aims to investigate rhetoric culture, and no less for personhood. It will be seen that the link between town and its personhood is not contrived by intellectual minds – particularly important given the contentious nature of academic portrayals of eastern Germany as noted in Chapter 2. It can be easily found in the sources themselves, in abundant quantities.

Starting to describe a town

The question of introducing a town is deceptively simple. The most simple way might be to show its location on a map. In this spirit, Fig. 3.3, overpage, shows my fieldsite of Halle an der Saale in relation of its position within the Federal Republic of Germany. Further, Fig. 3.4, also overpage, locates Halle within the more precise context of Saxony-Anhalt (*Sachsen-Anhalt*), its *Bundesland*. The maps shown are relatively neutrally-shaded in terms of significance. The shading in the first is merely to give an indication of which part had been the GDR. In the second map, the shading is based on physical relief. However, most of the maps of Germany I have seen in recent years do include shading of a different type. Whether academic (Kröhnert et al. 2006), or in the German press, maps which aim to make a comparative analysis of some socio-economic factor almost inevitably show Saxony-Anhalt, in the 'bad' colour. The rare exception was to show the difference between working and retired incomes. However, in this case, the 'good' colour suggested lower earnings in the first place. Often 'wealthy' Bavaria, or Baden-Württemberg, feature in positive hues. A textual description is similar. Merely to state basic historical, geopolitical and demographic data concerning Saxony-Anhalt, or Halle, invites almost fractal comment due to the historic and current instabilities which impact upon them.

Fig. 3.3

Map of the Federal Republic of Germany with *Bundesland* boundaries, showing Halle (marked with large arrow) as well as other places in the country including those mentioned in the thesis

Fig. 3.4

Map of Saxony-Anhalt and environs, with *Bundesland* boundaries, showing Halle (marked with large arrow) as well as other places, including those mentioned in this thesis

KEY

MAGDEBURG	*Bundesland* capitals
BERLIN*	Cities which are also *Bundesländer* in their own right
LEIPZIG	Large cities
Stendal	Smaller cities and towns
Brandenburg	Names of *Bundesländer*; where a native version differs from the English, it appears in italics below.

Even to situate Halle within its *Bundesland* brings problematic themes to mind, partly due to the relative novelty of that entity.

Before Saxony-Anhalt's creation in 1945 by Soviet occupying forces after the Second World War, it had had no administrative or territorial integrity. Professor of History at the Otto-von-Guericke University Magbeburg Tullner published a history of the *Bundesland* in 2008. It appeared in a widely popular general book series on a wide range of topics by reputable publisher C.H.Beck, one which appears in most bookshops. The historian, writing of his own *Bundesland*, notes that his task as writer of its history is made much more difficult because – except for Anhalt – it had no 'continuous development of core territories and dynasties', this being the framework onto which most territory-based histories are hung (2008:10). Even when Sachsen-Anhalt did exist, it had only done so for seven years before it faced abolition by the GDR government as *Bundesländer*, as their decentralised and federal nature 'conflicted with the dirigiste, strictly centralistic system' (2008:98). This short existence meant it 'had vanished from the consciousness of a large majority of those who lived here' and 'even those who knew [its] history and other experts agreed' (2008:106). This was in contrast to its neighbouring *Bundesländer* of Brandenburg, or Saxony proper, which had already seen its traditional green-and-white colours appearing on banners at the time of the popular demonstrations before the *Wende* (Tullner 2008:107) Indeed, the 'Saxony' in Saxony-Anhalt's name has no real connection to it, and reflects only that the large territory which encompasses the relatively small 'Anhalt' part, once itself formed part of the 'Prussian province of Saxony'.

Tullner's account of the *Bundesland*'s creation is somewhat reminiscent of Clemenceau's observation on Austria's fate at the Versailles peace conference. Whereas Clemenceau, as one of the victors in that war, could point to the map and say that once territories were carved up into new states that '*ce qui reste, c'est l'Autriche*' ('that which is left over, is Austria') (Brook-Shepherd 1996:249), here the sense seems to be a popular movement away from Saxony-Anhalt. Whereas the other GDR *Bezirke* (see Fig. 3.5) could easily be placed into an historical,

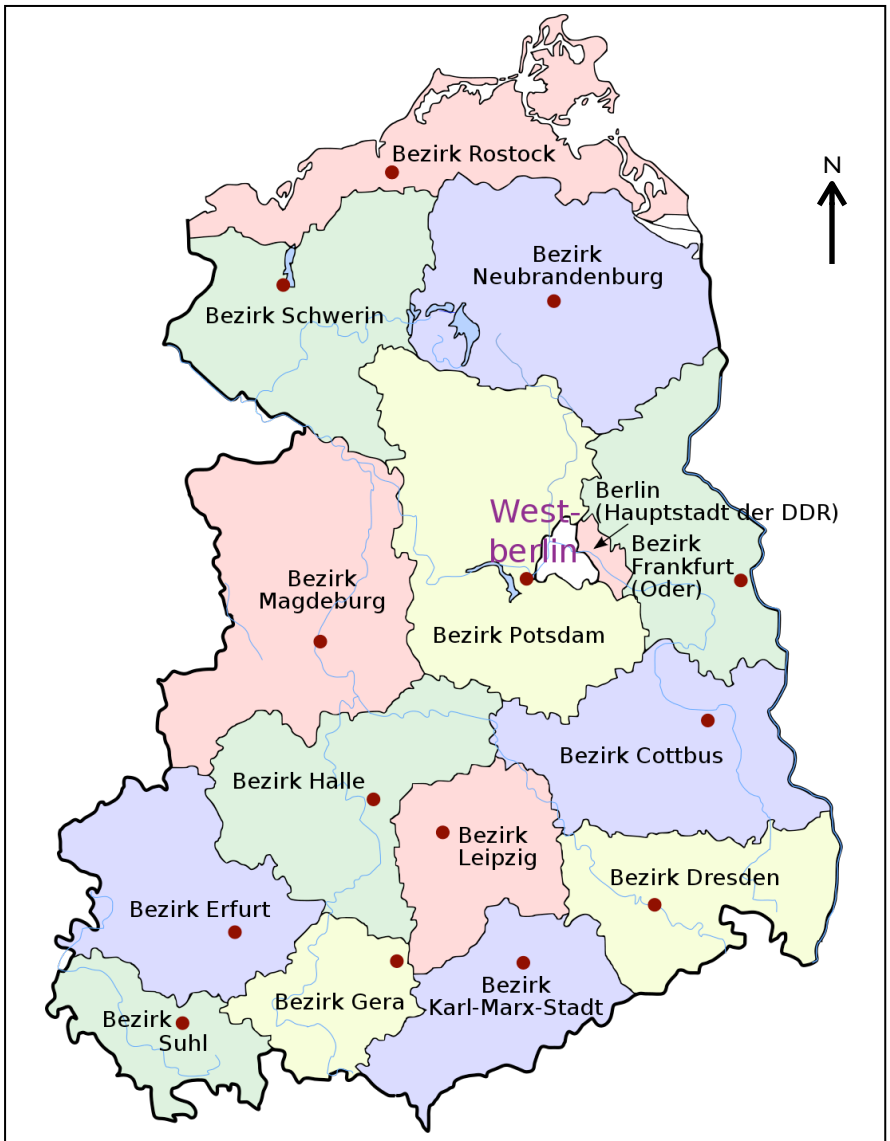

Fig. 3.5

Map of the administrative districts (*Bezirke*) of the GDR

KEY

Bezirk Gera	Names of the *Bezirke* ('districts')
●	Locations of the district capitals, after which the districts are named

territorial framework at the point of 'refederalisation', Tullner notes a tendency for areas inside the Halle and Magdeburg *Bezirke* to wish to join these other states (2008:107). Plebicites left it with a much reduced area and potential population than the former pre-1952 iteration (2008:108). Despite the predictions of then-Federal Chancellor Kohl that the now infamous 'blossoming landscapes [...] in which it is worth living and working' (Kohl 1990) would be found throughout the new *Bundesländer*, the depiction deteriorates in tone. Indeed, after a beginning imbued with shrinking, various factors combined to give Saxony-Anhalt 'the reputation of a crisis-shaken land' (Tullner 2008:110). This included deindustrialisation, high unemployment, political instability and regional division, for example represented by difficulties in deciding whether Magdeburg, Halle or Dessau should become capital. It is not just historians who comment. The economic situation may have improved, but Saxony-Anhalt is beset still today by sovereign debt.[15] Even the *Bundesland*'s own finance minister Jens Bullerjan has called for its abolition and subsequent subsumption into a larger merged state consisting of it, Saxony and Thuringia, on the grounds that its existence is no longer financially sustainable ([n.d.] 2009f). Unemployment remains high and for example, in October 2009, Saxony-Anhalt had the second highest per capita rate of '*ALGII*' ('*Arbeitslosengeld II*' – basic subsistence benefit received after one year's unemployment) claimants at 17%. This does not compare favourably to sixteenth- and final-place Bavaria, at 4.2% ([n.d.] 2009d).

Moving from *Bundesland* level to the city itself, Halle too faces negative depictions, statistically as well as qualitatively. Returning firstly to *ALGII* claimants, in a study where the largest fifty German settlements were compared, Halle had the highest rate at 13.2% in 2008, matched by the lowest rating for income per capita (INSM 2009a, b). In a slightly less serious, yet not less instructive, study, a set of reviews of male quality of life in fifty German/Austrian cities by the German-language edition of international men's lifestyle magazine *Men's Health* placed Halle forty-fifth ([n.d.] 2009b). The local media are no less prone to note Halle's lowly position in

[15] In 2004, it had the highest debt per capital of all the *Bundesländer*. Only the the city states of Berlin, Hamburg and Bremen were, according to Kröhnert et al., 'more catastrophic'. (Kröhnert et al. 2007:118)

München erfolgreichste deutsche Stadt

München ist in einer Rangliste unter den 50 größten deutschen Städten die wirtschaftlich erfolgreichste, Berlin ist das traurige Schlusslicht. Punkte verteilt wurden für 104 Indikatoren, u. a Bruttoinlandsprodukt, Einkommen, Kaufkraft, Arbeitslosenquote. BILD nennt die TopTen und die FlopTen.

Die TOPS

1 München
2 Münster
3 Frankfurt/M.
4 Karlsruhe
5 Düsseldorf
6 Stuttgart
7 Mannheim
8 Wiesbaden
9 Dresden
10 Braunschweig

Die FLOPS

41 Hamm
42 M'gladbach
43 Halle
44 Herne
45 Oberhausen
46 Wuppertal
47 Lübeck
48 Gelsenkirchen
49 Aachen
50 Berlin

(Quelle: Initiative Neue Soziale Marktwirtschaft/ Wirtschaftswoche)

Fig. 3.6

Halle on the 'floplist', on the first page of the city's mass tabloid ([n.d.] 2008d)

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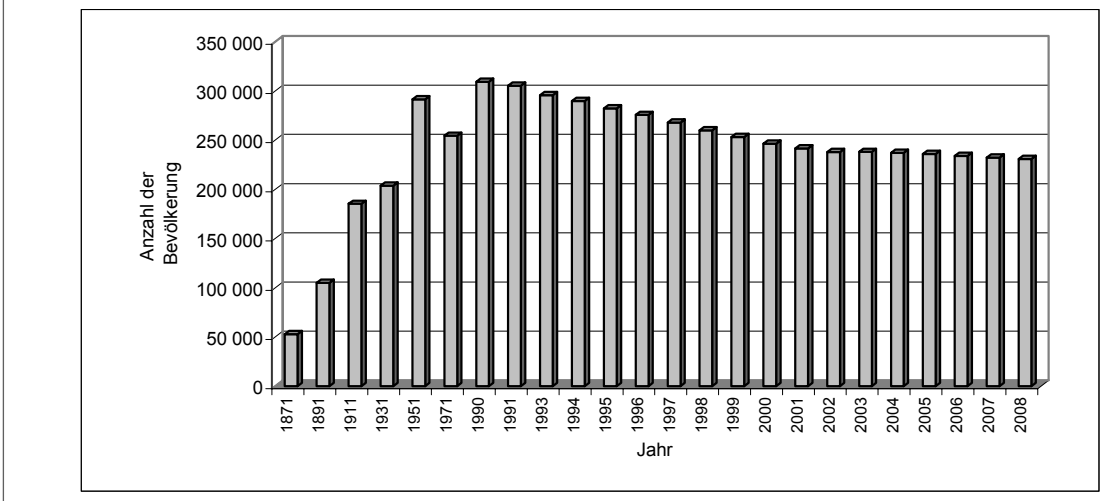
such tables. Fig. 3.6 shows an article from the Halle edition of the national mass audience *Bild* newspaper. Here, rather than being in the '*TopTen*' of Germany's cities, Halle can be seen in the bottom '*FlopTen*' appearing 'only' in forty-third place ([n.d.] 2008d) due to unemployment and low tax incomes and purchasing power ([n.d.] 2008e).[16] From the first mentions of Halle, it can already be seen that the media depictions of the city are relatively negative, matching those of the historians' and politicians' descriptions of its *Bundesland*.

[16] It might be surprising to note federal capital Berlin in bottom place. However, its placing is related to its high number of welfare claimants.

Halle's growth and shrinking – a dramatic narrative

Above, I mentioned Saxony-Anhalt's initial loss of population after reunification through voter choice, but depopulation itself became a topic of much discussion as time passed. If *Wikipedia*, as a democratic public source of depictions, is anything to go by, a statement of a settlement's population is something which normally features relatively early in a description thereof. Although that website does so for Halle, it is common for this statistic to be discussed more widely. The latest population figures are often discussed passionately on HalleForum.de and feature in the newspapers monthly as new data is released. It is thus clearly not sufficient to blithely note that the city had a population of 239,000 on 31 December 2008 , nor is it enough to mention a decrease of 1367 in the previous year (Stadt Halle/Saale 2009:37). Indeed, even the actual loss of 78,506 residents since 1990, a decrease of 25.4%, is not enough for the compilers of the official statistical report published by the city government. Neither is the graph they produce showing population development (Fig. 3.7). The textual description dramatically notes that Halle, 'in a comparatively short period of eighteen years the town had to observe a population loss in the dimensions of towns such as Bayreuth, Marburg or Brandenburg' (Stadt Halle/Saale 2009:37). The seriousness of the situation – and rhetorical culture 'situation' – is further reinforced when the figurative dimension is considered. It is clear that something dramatic has occurred when statisticians, not normally noted for their use of dramatic imagery, feel compelled to describe events in their own town by inviting the reader to imagine a town being removed from a city.

However, even the statisticians' relatively undramatic bar chart helps not only to demonstrate this downward development, but also to pinpoint when this situation arose and to what extent. It is not coincidental that this began in earnest at the point of reunification in 1990. Yet it is also important to note that before this the population of the area coterminous with Halle's current boundaries was on a general upward trend. Halle is not a rare case, for there are many cities in the eastern parts of Germany facing depopulation after an earlier generally-rising



Quelle: Statistisches Jahrbuch der Stadt Halle 1913 bis 1928
Staatliche Zentralverwaltung für Statistik, Kreisstelle Halle
Staatliche Zentralverwaltung für Statistik der DDR, Bezirksstelle Halle
Amt für Bürgerservice

Fig. 3.7

Graph showing development of Halle's population in 'selected years' (Stadt Halle/Saale 2009:40)

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trend. Saxony-Anhalt itself is however particularly badly affected by shrinkage to such an extent that Kröhnert et al. in their Berlin-Institut report on population in Germany are also drawn to hyperbole. They describe it as the '*Land der Leere*' ('the land of emptiness') (2006:110). Moreover, this loss is part of a general movement towards areas in the old *Bundesländer* which they describe as the '*große Treck gen Westen*' ('great trek into the west') (2006:44). The use of this dramatic imagery to describe the depopulation gives clear evidence that a 'situation' in the rhetoric culture sense is occurring. Of course, if this is the case, it begs the question of what its background is. If shrinking can occur, what caused the expansion whose results are now disappearing?

To create the narrative of Halle's present and future, the past must be known. A number of histories have been produced in recent years which provide information thereon (cf. W. Freitag and Ranft 2006; W. Freitag and Minner 2006). The fact these were written for the city's 1200th

anniversary betrays an 806 foundation.[17] Historians have noted that 'in the early medieval period it had importance not only as a military base and border fortification against eastern Slav[ic tribes] and an administrate and governmental seat of national importance, but also as a location of salt production, traffic intersection and centre for trade' (Dolgner 2000:7). However, salt was to be what Halle became famous for, and indeed, as was pointed out to me on an official guided tour on my first day there, that the city's name is believed to be based on the Celtic word for that substance.[18] Halle certainly produced it in large quantities, and the name of the powerful salt-makers' guild, the Halloren, lives on in the name of Halle's most famous modern food export, the *Halloren-Kugel*. This mass-produced delicacy, available in eastern German supermarkets in large quantities, is a chocolate confection produced in the shape of the buttons on the guild members' ceremonial tunics. The product is made by 'Germany's oldest chocolate factory', also named Halloren, based in the city. However, salt lost its relative importance as a source of the town's wealth in the late eighteenth century (Meißner 2006:476), and the nineteenth century saw its replacement as wealth creator and symbolic icon. Its replacement, mechanised industry, led to Halle becoming the focus of mechanical engineering in central Germany (Tullner 2007:41).

By the outbreak of WWI, over 10,000 were employed in this mechanised industry, accompanying various sectors which needed its products (Petri 2006:18). And although Halle already had a large urban class, it was the presence of lignite nearby, however, that helped bring about Halle's transformation into the 'central German Essen' (Tullner 2007:98), as its importance as a source of fuel was recognised. From it, the chemical industry developed principally after 1900 (Tullner 2007:70) and by 1927 Halle produced more than one quarter of Germany's output (Tullner 2007:98). The 'Leunawerke' complex to the south of Halle was set

[17] However, the actual date of its establishment depends on which date one takes depending on the charter or document used. And while Halle may have officially celebrated its 1200-year anniversary in 2006, it also officially celebrated its 1000-year anniversary with much pomp in 1961 (Wünsch 2008:5).

[18] This is, however, still debated within the academy, and onomatist Jürgen Udolph suggests its stem is Germanic, and nothing to do with salt. Others disagree and these debates also appear within the local press (cf. Ritter 2008; Hahmann 2009).

up by BASF in order to win ammonia – then, importantly, synthetic petrol – from the lignite (Tullner 2007:86). It became the main supplier to the Third Reich war machine (Tullner 2007:122) and was eventually workplace for more than 20,000 people (Tullner 2007:87). IG-Farben also opened a second important plant likewise to Halle's south. This 'Bunawerke' complex, where *Buna* synthetic rubber was produced was opened in 1937 (Tullner 2007:122). By the beginning of WW2, Halle had clearly become industrialised. As part of this, its working class population grew rapidly in proportion.

Between 1806 and 1910, compared with a general sevenfold increase, for example, the population engaged in mechanical and electrical engineering and plumbing saw 28.5-fold growth (Petri 2006:23). As the number of firms increased from 797 in 1816 to 4,952 in 1907, the mean number of wage-earning workers per firm increased from 1.5 to 6.3 (Petri 2006:24). This is not to say by any means that Halle was only working class, for the establishment of theatres, museums and art galleries, plus the expansion of the university added to its bourgeois character, as does the expansion of a banking sector at the turn of the century (Petri 2006:22-23). Yet between 1895 and 1905, for example, 96 per cent of all those who moved there were either manual workers or members of their families (Tullner 2007:67). Politically, Halle became known as a left-leaning town so much that by 1937 the militant national conservative Reichstag member and publisher Eduard Stadler could refer to it having been 'Central Germany's red stronghold' (1937:71). It had strong workers' organisations like trade unions, and Halle's election results from the Weimar period show that in general over 50% of people voted for a left-wing party. This was mirrored in the province of Saxony-Anhalt (Kügler 2006:63,73). Ernst Thälmann, leader of the KPD, the German communist party, gained a large 22.7% of the votes in the 1932 presidential election, compared to 29.7% for Hitler (Schmid 2006:273). However, this mention of Hitler brings attention to a problem which rises around this point when using contemporary sources.

The GDR description of Halle

Until this point the historical sources used in presenting Halle have been contemporary to the writing of this thesis, rather than contemporary to the time therein described. The exception above, the comment on Halle by Stadler from a 1937 book, did not come to me from my discoveries in bookshops, but from the 'altruism' of Google Books. As the National Socialist era approaches in the narrative, direct access to contemporary sources becomes much less simple. Not only are many Nazi materials – most famously *Mein Kampf* itself – banned in Germany, but they would have had difficulty surviving the war, and the GDR. There is a further point, and one which applies to sources to the GDR too. Unlike today, sources produced between 1933 and 1989 in eastern Germany were not produced in a period of official freedom of opinion such as guaranteed by Article 5 of the Federal Republic's German constitution ('*Grundgesetz*' or 'basic law'). Although they may be much more 'findable', GDR-era texts hail from a period where, in a similar way, 'the almost uniform mass media, the well-organised mass gatherings, the hulking apparatus of party and state presented a façade of a smoothly functioning propaganda machine' (Bytwerk 1999:400) through agitation-propaganda ('Agit-Prop') organised centrally and locally by the SED. Even if not all publications were overtly political, 'all were necessarily produced under licence and clearly subject to political conditions' (Fulbrook 2005:68). And although dissidents did exist, knowledge production and dissemination occurred under the same circumstances, with social scientists 'called to actively participate in the further formation of the developed socialist society and critical examination of imperialism' (Hager 1976:5).[19] Even the august Humboldt University of Berlin notes its activities changed from its 'humanistic traditions' to complying with those of 'the Communist ideology of the GDR' (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin 2010). Publications must therefore be viewed with this in mind, yet through them the extent to which ideology is represented in texts can be analysed. And as shall be seen from the texts on Halle and its surroundings discussed below, if a reader of such tomes had no advance knowledge of this ideology, it would likely rapidly become clear from the content.

[19] Hann notes that this, for example, was expected of anthropologists themselves (2009:223-225).

Fig. 3.8

Front cover of Magdeburg street plan (VEB Landkartenverlag 1969)

If the person asked to provide a description of Halle had solely GDR-era publications at hand on which to base the response, the impression given would have a large focus on its productivity. Dr Werner Piechocki was director of Halle's official city archive from 1951-93. From the archive itself, during a book sale on the 'Night of Museums', for €2 I purchased a 33-page pamphlet on Halle's history written in 1972 by Piechocki himself. If the text's inherent Marxist-Leninist ideological stance were not clear from its inherent focus on the working classes and their conditions as history progresses and industrialisation occurs, it would through its eventual almost exclusive focus on the workers' movement and left-wing (and eventually Communist) parties – complete with uncritical reproductions of communist party flyers. It concludes its presentation of history's onward march by noting that Halle has more to do under the motto of the SED's eighth general congress – 'Everything serves the good of the working person!'. Then, after further integration with Comecon countries, for example, it would be a city which would 'prove itself worthy of its great past and continue building an enlightened

future' (Piechocki 1972:32-33). The focus on work and production is no less evident though, in texts which attempt to describe Halle's (then) contemporary situation. The 1984 edition of the *Handbuch Deutsche Demokratische Republik* ('Handbook GDR'), an encyclopaedic volume covering a variety of topics related to the state, its geography, infrastructure and population is similarly focused. (Lexikonredaktion des VEB Bibliographisches Institut Leipzig 1984). This text provides information on Halle within the context of the GDR's *Bezirke*. A map of these can found in Fig. 3.7. The first sentence of the introductory paragraph to Halle's section notes that 'with a share of almost 16% of the republic's gross industrial production, [it] assumes very integral positions in the national economy of the GDR, above Karl-Marx-Stadt as most important industrial district' (1984:109) and it is noted Halle has become 'a focal point for the working class' (1984:110). Similar descriptions abound.

Although not referring directly to Halle, the front cover of a city map of current Saxony-Anhalt capital Magdeburg (Fig. 3.8) gives equal prominence in the illustrations on its front cover to industry and agriculture as it does to buildings. *Bezirk Halle*, a richly illustrated book on Halle and its surrounding district, created jointly with the district SED hierarchy (Verlag Zeit im Bild 1981:16), presents a similar heavy focus on industry, especially primary and secondary (agriculture, chemical and mining, for example). Of the 260 photographs in this 201-page volume, 100 are direct representations of production and persons (generally happily or at least contentedly) engaged therein. Of the others, a large number are in some way connected to that process. In the relatively few pages of text, Halle's productive capacity is likewise heavily highlighted. Indeed, a whole chapter entitled 'industrious – robust – successful' is dedicated to that task. And besides this description of Halle, the epithet '*Chemiebezirk*' ('chemical district') (1981:29) adds to the overall sense. Halle is presented as a place of work, and one which has its importance on account of the products of that work, and not least the producers thereof. I will show below how the two become almost inextricably linked in this presentation of ideological rhetoric. This connection of personhood and work is strong, yet another dimension

lurks alongside it. *Bezirk Halle* contains cheerful people engaged in political or ideologically-linked activities.

There are, for example, many instances of persons engaged in party activities. These include attending study meetings and mass rallies of the FDJ. Within this framework, activities which in western capitalist society would not necessarily be politically linked, such as a singing club (1981:156), or a 'workers' and farmers' festival' (1981:136) have been (visibly) organised by the party apparatus, and also linked to the place of production. The final chapter of the book, entitled '*Sozialismus – Sache aller*' (Socialism – thing/cause/concern for everyone') begins with a statement that 'the purpose of our socialist democracy is that the creativity and imagination of the workers is consciously and deliberatively focused on the creation/formation of one's own social existence' (1981:177). To prove how this is indeed the case, the style of earlier chapters is continued. Whereas they contained great lists of data on, for example, the number of pigs, cattle, eggs, produced in the district, or indeed new medical facilities, here over three pages, people's engagement is likewise quantified. For example, the reader learns that 'in discussions over the 1980 national economic plans workers submitted 49,000 suggestions of which 23,000 were incorporated' (Verlag Zeit im Bild 1981:178). Further, 250,000 workers took part in 17,000 socialist schools and almost 28,000 engage in 3,000 'conflict commissions'. The young are likewise involved, with 3,745 elected representatives in the *Bezirk*, 200,000 taking part in 'Circles of young socialists' and 4,000 holding positions of responsibility in the FDJ, the *Freie Deutsche Jugend*, the SED's mass youth organisation (1981:179). Thus it is clear to the reader that both Halle, its industry, large, representative numbers of its people and their free-time activities are all positively and beneficially linked through and by the ideology of the party. Through this, they are helping to create the socialist future, by creating themselves, as persons, as socialists. However, there is a rather obvious caveat which requires some more attention. This is the party's opinion, expressed in a publication produced by it.

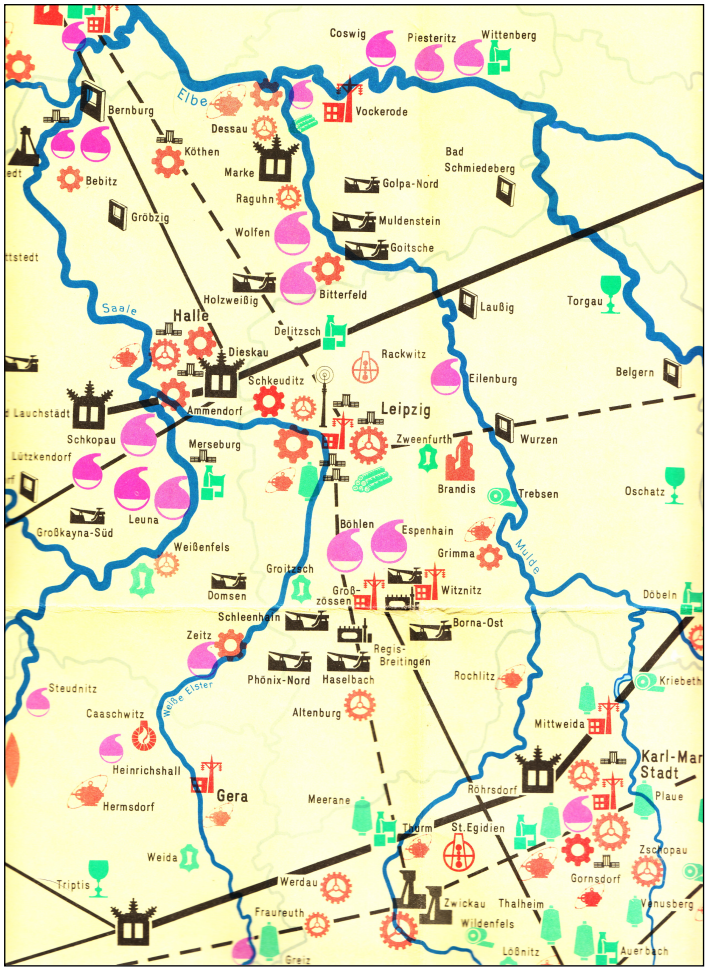


Fig. 3.9

Extract of map of GDR showing Halle's importance as place of production, within its infrastructural network (VEB Hermann Haack 1964)

Fig. 3.10

GDR postage stamp showing the Leunawerke (Deustche Post der DDR)

Despite this caveat, in one respect it is quite historiographically correct that Halle would be presented as *Bezirk Halle* does. It did become quite clearly a heavily industrialised city, especially so. The industrial development of Halle, as mentioned above, did rapidly increase Halle's population, which continued after the end of WWII. The state chemical expansion plan of 1958 saw a second Leuna complex built (Tullner 2007:154) and the decision of the *Politbüro* on 17 September 1963 for a rapid expansion of the Leuna and Buna complex (Wiesener 2006:444) increased Buna's product range. The working population grew in unison, and in 1961, 3,500 new homes were built to the south (Tullner 2007:156). This was accompanied by new town Halle-Neustadt's construction, consisting of 33,000 homes in pre-fabricated concrete highrise buildings for 120,000 people (Tullner 2007:163). In its function of industrial centre, Halle was to fulfil its place in a network of infrastructural connectedness – as the GDR-era map, entitled *Created by the force of the people*, in Fig. 3.9 shows. Further, as a picture in *Bezirk Halle* displays its industrial linkages by showing the destination of a piece of machinery towards Syria (BZH), the GDR postage stamp in Fig. 3.10 highlights that (here, petrochemically), through its productive people, Halle was firmly connected to its 'socialist brother countries' towards the east. And if people were shown to be happy in the texts, do more statistics prove it, in the form of average results of 98–99% for the SED-led *Nationale Front* block (Ashby Turner 1992:58-59) throughout the GDR's history? Does the statistic of between 40,000 and 60,000 demonstrators at the 17 June 1953 demonstrations on Halle's Hallmarkt square (Löhn 2003:148), or the similar appearance of peaceful demonstrators calling for democracy in 1989, provide evidence to counter the pictures in *Bezirk Halle* of mass rallies and parades of FDJ members or workers? While Halle's industrial importance is quite clear, *Bezirk Halle* is clearly an ideological text. Yet what is most interesting here in an ideological analysis of the rhetoric used, is the quantitive style itself. Just as the election results showed how little the GDR authorities thought about the persons behind the data, the listing of statistics in the final chapter of *Bezirk Halle* on participation in socialist society reflects precisely the ideological – and as shall be seen, very rhetorical – sense of the relationship between the individual and the collective in the GDR's version of socialism.

The individual versus the collectivity – persuasion at work

The first time I went to Berlin in 2002, I found a flea market near Alexanderplatz. A lady selling old books directed me, via *U-Bahn*, to her husband's shop, where I obtained the third edition of the *Kleines Politisches Wörterbuch* (G. Schütz et al. 1978), or 'Small political dictionary'. Produced by the state-owned Dietz publishing house, it provides a set of definitions as official as can be found. Significant, too, is that dictionaries seem to feature often in the books left outside doorsteps. Likewise, another researcher on this project who grew up in the GDR told me they had possessed one too! Not only do these books 'define' their ideological stance, they were commonly accessible. This interesting potential is certainly found in the definitions on individualism and society. Another dictionary, the *Philosophisches Wörterbuch* ('philosophical dictionary') explains that individualism represented a practice or way of thinking 'which places the human individual in the centre, accentuates the paramountcy of his interests, rights and needs and places these in opposition to those of the society' (Klaus and Buhr 1964:255). The *Kleines Politisches Wörterbuch* suggests individualism was something most un-GDR-like. Rather, it is characteristic of society 'under the conditions of capitalist private ownership of means of production', namely the west, and used to 'justify exploitation, striving for profit and for selfishness' (G. Schütz et al. 1978:370). In comparison, 'in socialism', the GDR's governmental and ideological system, 'Marxism-Leninism opposes bourgeois individualism with socialist collectivism as human thought and behavioural patterns' (Klaus and Buhr 1964:256). Instead, 'in Marxism-Leninism, the interests of the society are the interests of the individual', and thus 'the interests of the individual are only realised with and through the interests of the society' (Klaus and Buhr 1964:287). Such socialist collectivism and related thinking engenders such lofty characteristics such as 'solidarity', 'constant readiness for selfless help for others' and in the end, it develops a new personality type 'constantly aware of its role and meaning of community and its place in it' (Klaus and Buhr 1964:288). It is thus positive to remain reticent and not overstate one's talents. If anything is to be praised, it is the communal effort. Reflecting *Bezirk Halle*, in the GDR it is by being one of an un-named collective where personal importance lies.

Image details: Shows capped, boiler suit-wearing man consulting dial showing 'our daily production' ('*unsere tägliche Produktion*'). As well as numerals, the dial shows cartoon faces whose expression becomes more happy as production increases.

Photograph by Erich Gross, July 1949

Fig. 3.11

For copyright reasons, image does not appear in final version. For access to photograph, contact the German government Bundesbildarchiv and request photograph 183-S86551

Fig. 3.12

Creating prosperity along with others has made this women smile, according to the propagandist.

Reproduced with kind permission of Randall Bytwerk

Source: <http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/postersgdr/prosperity.jpg>

Fig. 3.13

Medal for a 'collective of socialist work' member earned for 'socialistic working, learning and living' – A reward for doing so highlights further how these concepts were linked at all levels,.

This sense of collective importance rather than individual is no less related to work and production. Mirroring the 'socialist collectivism' mantra, the unit of workers in a factory was the 'brigade', or the 'collective' itself. This is part of a socialist work ethic, or '*Arbeitsmoral*' which was expected to be followed, and defined in the *Kleines Politisches Wörterbuch* thus:

> 'The Socialist work ethic is expressed in creative, responsible work in the interests of society inclusive of every individual, helping those left behind, as well as striving for the highest achievements, full use of labour time and the most sparing employment of material and financial means.' (G. Schütz et al. 1978:76-77)

This was even enshrined in labour law. Although it did not contain the Stalinist (and indeed Biblical), '*кто не работает, тот не ест*' ('who does not work, shall not eat') of Article 12 of the 1936 USSR constitution, the first clause of the first paragraph of the first chapter of the *Arbeitsgesetzbuch* ('labour code') notes that the main task of creating a developed socialist

society was to increase living standards (Volkskammer der DDR 1977). Clause 3 of paragraph 2 (highlighted by the former owner of the edition I found in a Halle second-hand bookshop) confirms that the law should see realised the principle of 'each to his ability, each to his performance', guaranteeing equal pay levels for all. The likewise-highlighted clause 5 requires that the law should advance the creation of the socialistic personality and way of life among all, through comradeship and taking of responsibility. To what extent one can legislate to ensure such occurs is not clear.

However, the message was also carried into the factories in forms other than rules and regulations. Like a 'gold star' received in a British school for good work, Fig. 3.11 shows that this striving for the highest levels of production was visually represented in a form of

Fig. 3.14

Being taught in FDJ colours at a very early age is seen as representative of the lifestyle to the extent, it features in the book typifying the life of the persons of that year cohort. (Ludeck 2009:26)

propaganda within the factories, with 'smiley faces' being shown as the result of meeting output targets. In addition to this, Fig. 3.12 shows that it was not only the process of 'creating prosperity' that would make the worker feel like smiling. The cheerful lady on this workplace poster, complete with SED conference logo, exclaims that she is doing it as part of a larger group. *'Mit'*, which alone as a preposition means 'with', highlights the collective sense of '*mitmachen*', the German particle verb for participating or getting involved. One of the GDR's awards for particularly good performance by collectives, the *Kollektiv der Sozialistischen Arbeit* ('collective of socialist labour') did not require merely high levels of production. As can be witnessed from Fig. 3.13 – an example I found in a second-hand shop in Halle – it was inscribed that it honoured 'socialistic working, learning and living'. It required that collective members involved themselves in social activities with the group as well (Sommer 2000:186). It is clear that a certain form of personhood is being fostered by the state, in the workplace. Not only this, but it is done using the heavily rhetorical agent that is propaganda. However, this was not limited to the workplace. It began much earlier than at working age.

Gallinat's (2002b, 2005) investigation of the state socialist-era *Jugendweihe* (youth consecration) initiation ceremony, with over ninety per cent of the population as participants, is an example of how this began early in life. This ritual is but one example of where the so-called 'socialist personality' should be created by the collectivity, as evinced from the book *Vom Sinn unseres Lebens* (*On the meaning of our lives*) (Zentraler Ausschuß 1983) distributed to participants and cited by Gallinat. Replete with socialist 'teaching', including a section titled 'Marxism-Leninism – our compass' (Zentraler Ausschuß 1983:79ff.), it offers what might be described as how to put the theory of the dictionaries mentioned above into everyday practice. Indeed, it is worth highlighting it was by no means in this ceremony alone that the teaching of state ideology to the young occurred. School lessons followed and imparted socialist doctrine, 'geared to the transformation of both individual personality and structure of the wider society' (Fulbrook 2005:120). *Staatsbürgerschaftskunde*, a school subject, taught young people how to be good citizens. Even the seemingly neutral natural sciences could be imbued with ideology, with a

Fig. 3.15

Ausländeramt building, with Marx (circled) on the right-hand mural panel (12 May 2008)

Fig. 3.16

Corridor in Dreyhaupt school with 'famous men', Halle (23 October 2008)

physics textbook for 15-year-olds I purchased extolling the virtues of socialist energy production compared with the 'exploitation of the working classes' in capitalist societies (Brunstein et al. 1960:119). This is seen also in *Bezirk Halle*, which depicts pictorially organised study sessions in FDJ uniforms studying the biography of GDR communist martyr Ernst Thälmann (Verlag Zeit im Bild 1981:24). Fig. 3.14, from the 1980 version of the *Born in…* series of books, which aims to characterise the lives of all persons of that age, shows members of the Thälmann-Pionere, the branch of the FDJ for young children, busy at work, uniformed, doing arts and crafts. Ideology, socialisation and education were well linked, regularly and repeatedly.

Even today, exploring Halle gives opportunity to encounter the remnants of this ubiquity of party ideology. Perhaps particularly relevant to the anthropologist from abroad is the building, in Halle-Neustadt, in which the town's *Ausländeramt* is located. If Marx and Engels thought the spectre of Communism haunted Europe (1998[1848]:33), Marx's own image performs the same function at this municipal office which processes 'foreigners'. It displays two murals on the edifice, with Marx clearly visible (Fig. 3.15), although additional examples could easily be listed. Further, most shockingly for me, the municipal secondary school in which I attended Hungarian night courses still displays, despite the wear and tear of twenty years passing, the GDR-era pupils' posters on the contributions of Kant, Hegel, Feuerbach, Marx and Engels noting that even today we can learn much from these 'famous men' (cf. Fig. 3.16). It is a coincidence yet 'something good to think with' that the school in which the posters of the 'famous men' are visible trains pupils (of various ages) for a multitude of trades and creative jobs – a role it has had under various names from its opening in 1890, and during and then after the state socialist period (BbS III "Johann Christoph von Dreyhaupt" [n.d.]). Its website notes, and as an acquaintance confirmed, pupils are required to complete practical training in the workplace.

Such practices also occurred in the GDR, and one informant, now self-employed and of whom much more appears in Chapters 6 and 7, told me how at one point he was a teacher involved in

the process. Pupils 'were accustomed to factory life' by spending one day per week there, following a preparatory youth camp on the Baltic coast. As part of this process he was required to be in the FDJ and naturally the SED. Therefore, it is clear that a heavily ideological party/state apparatus attempted to create, from an early age, both within and outside school to create 'socialist personalities'. It continued this into the workplace by taking children to be shown how to work in the correct collective way. Once there, they were expected to do so, and heavily encouraged to do so. As a collectivity the worker should be highly productive. As part of the greater productive collective that was –here – the one's city of Halle, and the GDR, and indeed the Comecon countries, all would function in one system of production which would bring a brighter future at all levels. There is a great deal of persuasion concerning work, at work. But, despite this ubiquity, a question remains: did this persuasion itself work?

Did the persuasion work?

On the question of efficacy of propaganda, Bytwerk states that 'no society is literally totalitarian, able to control all aspects of citizens' lives' (Bytwerk 1999:401). In terms of the *Jugendweihe,* Gallinat notes that while this text and the ritual itself were heavily imbued with the state's socialist message, her informants seemed to remember more the material and individualistic aspects of the event and preparations. They talked much about the gifts received and the fashionable clothing worn. In general, 'the participants brought their own interpretations and emphasis to the *Jugendweihe*, which were grounded in social immediacy' (Gallinat 2005:302), not socialist ideology. This is mirrored in contemporary popular texts available widely in Halle's city bookshops. A book entitled *Growing up in Halle in the 60s and 70s* describes in much detail from the perspective of someone of that era, written in the first-person-plural, the experiences of life until reaching the age of maturity. It recounts, for example, the great debates over dress for the ceremony and procuring scarce luxury foodstuffs for the party afterwards. The days preceding saw people 'in great tension and anticipation', with the youths, the 'we', in 'respect of the expected presents' of which 'money was naturally

preferred' (Bartholomäus and Küster 2008:47). This most un-socialist situation is further presented in the 1972 version of the *Born In…* series.[20] One of the most revelatory comments made by Gallinat's informants was that 'ideology was so at the forefront of everything that it seemed to have rendered itself meaningless' (Gallinat 2005:299). From the textual and visual evidence presented above, that seems to be a risk in other areas too.

The potential overwhelming volume is highlighted by the fact one fifth of the GDR population had some indirect propagandist role, and of this 200,000 SED members had some direct duty involving agitation-propaganda (Bytwerk 1999:403). In terms of content and style, even officials noted the boredom- and indifference-inducing qualities due, among other things, to the 'necessity to quote the "sacred writings" of Marxism-Leninism', to phrase things in 'Party Chinese' (Marxist-Leninist jargon), as well as overall uniformity (Bytwerk 1999:406). From the style of the list in *Bezirk Halle*, it might come as little surprise that repetition was also an issue. Journalist Funder, for example, quotes an interviewee who mimics GDR news broadcasts for their repetition of plan fulfilment figures without providing any useful content (Funder 2003:100-101). From a rhetoric culture viewpoint, perhaps the cultural items of state socialist doctrine had the potential to lose their relevance to the *kairos* of time passing through sheer ubiquity. However, it would be easy from our post-*Wende*, post-socialist temporal position to wonder how anyone could be persuaded by such dull and repetitious exhortations – especially given the tendency for state propaganda to be somewhat oblique to the truth. Yet, it is clear from a text such as *Bezirk Halle*, that despite its dullness, much of the content itself cannot be argued with in the sense that if these things did happen, it was a good thing. Providing a list of improvements to living standards might be repetitiously boring, but that 150 new gymnasia have been built in the district is generally a positive outcome. Likewise, when 22.4% of workers have had an increase in their basic salaries or that district has been 'enriched' with 22,000 extra kindergarten places(Verlag Zeit im Bild 1981:102-03).

[20] There are two versions of this book, a standard edition (Wildberg 2006), and another for those who 'grew up in the GDR' (Bork 2007)!

Fulbrook notes that a conference was held in 1958 in Bitterfeld, a heavily-industrial town north of Halle, during which 'workers were urged to "grasp the pen", while writers were encouraged to gain practical experience of manual labour and life in the factory' (2002:236-37). The first part of the order was put into action in the form of the *Zirkel Schreibender Arbeiter* ('Circle of writing workers'). From the eBay seller down the street I managed to get an example of where working people seem to have been moved to write in praise of the party and its achievements, from Bitterfeld itself, produced ten years later, as part of this state-wide initiative. Sommer suggests that the movement produced little of note, partly due to the low quality, he blames among other things the content as well, being too based on the party's strict regulations for the content of publications (2000:396-97) From this content of this volume, titled *Bitterfelder Ernte* or 'Bitterfeld Harvest', it seems that although many of the poems and short stories are of somewhat more profane themes, like the Halle carnival in local dialect, there was a heavy focus on work – especially their own – and the qualities of the GDR itself. A mechanic's poem, *Karbid*, talks of the ubiquity of carbide, made at the Bunawerke, and of its manifold uses (Bezirksvorstand des FDGB Halle and Rat des Bezirkes Halle 1968:56-57). A poem *Leuna*, written by a former hairdresser turned chemical worker, extols the virtues of the factory complex located therein, as well as its heroic, engaged workers (1968:94-95). The party is likewise praised, with the poem directly following, *Das Symbol*, giving a former lathe operator's exegesis of the SED's logo of two hands intertwined, representing a story of past struggle and cheerful future not dissimilar to that which Piechocki's history of Halle, alluded to. There is a sense of emotional attachment in the poems which is hard to ignore.

A modern reader might well dismiss a poem on the SED symbol as an attempt at glorifying a party involved in repression, or as a personal attempt at currying favour. However, someone writing heartfelt poetry about the products they toil hard in unpleasant conditions to produce is rather heartwarming. There is a sense of pride in work and production in this poem, and in many of the others. A similar sense of pride is described by eastern German sociologist Engler,

Fig. 3.17

First-day cover for the 12th International Women's Chess Tournament in Buna (1978)

Stamp element of image public domain under same rules mentioned in Fig. 3.10.

who suggests the term '*arbeiterliche Gesellschaft*' or 'worker-ish society' to refer to the GDR (Engler 2004:73ff.). Whereas he does not suggest that workers possessed political power, he claims the 'social and cultural sceptre lay in their hands' (Engler 2004:76) due largely to a sense of equality with other classes. This was created partly through their importance in Marxism-Leninism, the resonant and repeated expression of this in state discourse, which can be clearly seen in texts such as *Bezirk Halle*. *'Arbeiterliche Gesellschaft'* does not only refer to the workplace as workplace, however. Engler highlights the importance of the workplace as a place of creating sociality. He suggests that while most workplaces have some sense of camaraderie between those employed there, GDR factories were 'not normal workplaces' (2004:117). Rather, GDR '*Kombinate*' were 'multiplexes' which carried out myriad functions where even though 'work stood in the middle point, a society in miniature formed simultaneously around it like a corona' (Engler 2004:116). Listing the examples of facilities in the Bitterfeld photographic

film factory he notes among many other things childcare, a sauna, library, bookshop, choir, tailors, sports club, children's ballet, painting club, film club and theatre. Fig. 3.17 shows a postal first day cover – sourced from eBay – celebrating the twelfth international women's chess tournament, held at the Bunawerke sports club. Here, in these workplaces 'socialism' becomes linked with sociality.

The shrinking begins

When everything is going well, the model of GDR factory as corona of sociality works. However, the situation was to change. The GDR in general faced massive job losses after reunification. Unprofitable state industries were either closed, or had their workforces rationalised after privatisation by federal authorities. An instructive example for the scale of these losses is the former-state railway company Deutsche Reichsbahn. Following restructuring and merger with the FRG Bundesbahn to create the current Deutsche Bahn, it had lost the equivalent of 63% of its former workforce. Given that the remainder was 217,372 (Völker 2003:40) the scale of the losses becomes clear. With unemployment officially non-existent in the GDR, this was a crisis indeed. However, as Engler himself notes, they were 'monocultures', and often the main economic and social outlet in towns, especially in newly-created settlements, much like Halle-Neustadt and Buna or Leuna (Engler 2004:119). This created a perilous situation, in light of what he calls '*Downsizing auf ostdeutsch*' ('Downsizing in eastern German'). Although Engler referred to the whole of the GDR, it resonates particularly well with the description of Halle today seen above:

> processes of shrinking without intrinsic degree and identifiable end, shrinking across the board. Population, towns, factories, people in their social calibre – everything is shrinking. (Engler 2004:102)

Thus as he correctly notes, the widespread closure of industry after the *Wende* resulted 'simultaneously in a social and cultural bloodletting from which eastern Germany will not soon recover' (Engler 2004:119).

Given the great importance placed on work, this loss of work and workplaces as 'coronas' of sociality as might be expected had social and emotional effects. It would be expected if any factory closed. However, in eastern Germany this was particularly significant. For example, Berdahl noted that among former suspender clip factory workers in Kella she found 'the loss of a worker identity inculcated through forty years of state ideology and physical labor' indeed 'contributed to many women's confusion and depression' (Berdahl 1999:193). Thus, the losses are not only of population, or even industrial. Rather they are extremely multidimensional. This is likely 'social' too: being told in the media that you reside in a problematic place – that you live in a city on the 'floplist' of Germany's least successful cities, for example as seen above – is on a long term basis potentially as negative for the reputation of the place as it is for the good cheer of the citizens as regards its and their own future. However, once again, the situation of eastern Germany in particular adds a further complication.

The vast majority of the texts I have presented and which represent Halle were produced by people from Halle, or from eastern Germany. The texts do not pull punches, and state criticism of the city. I hightlighted in Chapter 2 how eastern Germans can feel angry when criticised by others, and I have shown previously (2010a) how problems can arise in such cases. In that particular instance, a Western student and journalist moved to Halle and blogged on his new life within the city. After complaining, among other things, about the lack of consumer choice in terms of food and entertainment he was heavily lambasted for being a show-off consumerist and materialist 'spoilt little *Wessi*' ('*verwöhntes Wessikind*') by readers. He was criticised for being a typical example of such people who just arrive, know little of Halle and its history, and begin to complain. There are three interesting aspects to this. Firstly, is is clear that the people of Halle are evidently less than indifferent about their town and are discussing the situation in which they and Halle find themselves. In light of the descriptions of their town as seen above, there is a sense that the qualitative dimension of these descriptions should be discussed rather than blithely and apathetically accepted. The second of these important aspects is that it is

already possible to see a criticism of western consumerism, individualism and inflated personal arrogance, of seeing your own needs before society's, that are particularly reminiscent of the GDR-era texts viewed above.

Although the criticism of the bloger hails from 2009 and from Halle within a reunified (and capitalist) Federal Republic, this is not unreminiscent of the *Kleines Politisches Wörterbuch* cited above which points to individualism being a feature of capitalist societies. The third important point, following from this, is that a westerner (a '*Wessi*') is being criticised for his particular views, as an individual representative of that western individualism. As I will show in this thesis, it simply cannot be said that eastern Germans view everything western as negative. However, in 2000, ten years after reunification, a CDU politician described the stereotypes of *Ossis* and *Wessis*. This was not to confirm them as reflecting a particular reality, but to point to the fact they still existed as stereotypes. He noted that easterners were seen as incorrigible 'lazy, incapable, irresponsible sissies, incapable of democracy'. The westerner was in comparison seen as 'mean, arrogant, conniving, greasy play acting type, duping poor easterners' (Egert 2000:65). Yet, now even after the passing of almost twenty years, it seems that there is still evidence for a rhetorical '*Mauer im Kopf*', the 'wall in the head' between the easterners and westerns, the *Ossis* and *Wessis*. However, there is one poem in *Bitterfelder Ernte* which is particularly interesting given the high population losses Halle has experienced, and it too likewise has a modern counterpart which is no less instructive.

Bitterfelder Ernte, alongside its panegyric of work and the worker, and of the social nature thereof, is also polemic, at times quite philippic, against those in the West. The violent xenophobia in Frankfurt am Main is the theme of an eponymous poem (Bezirksvorstand des FDGB Halle and Rat des Bezirkes Halle 1968:207). The *Heimkehrer*, or 'homecomer' to Halle back from Essen, who claims he misses his family but has no relatives (208) stands alongside the woman who laughs at her friend whose delight in receiving soap from her Western aunt is curtailed when she discovers its GDR provenance (151-52). Thus the (then only-Western)

Federal Republic is cast as far from the paradise of materialism and freedom. Alongside the contributions praising high productivity, and the party and ideology, the West is being brought into rhetorical action. It is useful to compare this older text with a further example from the present. A debate thread on HalleForum.de ([n.d.] 2007–) poses the question 'why did you get out of Halle?' in its title. In the thread, former and current residents discuss the motivations people have, or have had, to leave their home town. The discussion over the city's shrinking gets intensely personalised, and there is much evidence of hostility to economic individualism which is contrasted to thinking socially and collectively. In the twelve pages containing a total of 117 posts, during some heavy debate, is generally the case that leaving to gain employment where there is otherwise no chance is accepted. Conversely, leaving in order to make oneself rich is not. A further taboo is complaining about Halle if one is not actually there (as easterner who has left) and thus not doing something to improve the situation. Finally, the idea of going westwards – for that seems to be the assumption within the discussion that this is the direction in which people will go – to swap one's homeland, to which one should be emotionally attached, for a life in a small western suburb is regarded as negative and offering no improvement.

As with the example from the western German blogger previously mentioned, there is a noticeable amount of rhetoric concerning personhood in these three examples. The western blogger was held up to be personally consumerist and individualist; people who have left Halle are likewise described as selfish and antisocial. Earning money is negative when for reasons of excess personal profit at the expense of the collective. However, this personhood rhetoric is not only based on economic activity and social activity, but the styles of personhood are linked to place. Halle, or eastern Germany, becomes increasingly linked to the 'good' version; Western Germany becomes linked to the bad. This is complicated, however. An eastern German is assumed to have become less eastern by leaving. A westerner is assumed to have kept theirs when they leave for Halle. Despite this, the broad categories remain. On top of this, however, is the particularly significant temporal dimension to this rhetoric. There are almost forty years between the Internet-based texts and the printed. Further, equidistantly

between them chronologically is a significant 'regime change'. Although there has been a great deal of geopolitical and systematic socio-economic change, the rhetoric of the past is almost being exactly reproduced to discuss the present: like posters uncovered by floods, or still stuck to school walls, the rhetoric seems to remain somehow.

Certainly, a certain aspect of this appropriation of past rhetoric is timeless. Leaving a homeland can be criticised by those who remain at any period in history. However, there are dimensions which are very particular to this place. Rhetorically at least, there seems to be a continuation of the cultural items of eastern solidarity versus western individualism. For a rhetoric culture analysis, it is interesting to note that this form of description of events and persons has been described as being a particulary eastern German thing. Engler has suggested the term 'eastern German idiom' to describe the way in which easterners express their dissatisfaction with the situation in the reunified Germany. He believes that it has a common denominator, and it is

> the lament over the shrinking of the social senses. Not helping those needing help, not being able to expect help from others, because, like oneself, were now only occupied with themselves – this misfortune outweighed both career progression and material wellbeing. (Engler 2004:29-30)

It is not so much a 'genre' of speech in the classic sense. However, it is more of a type, based more on content, but the style can be important. Engler goes on to note that

> it can be 'uninhibitedly expressed and loaded with tension, expressed targetedly and unintentionally, defensive and offensive, in the large and small plural (2004:19).

Thus, it is a particular form of rhetoric which can be easily applied to persons in groups of whatever size. Yet, the message of the rhetoric is similar, and can be 'bald' in Brown and Levinson terms.

Reversing the shrinking?

While it is clear, from a rhetoric culture point of view, that a space of deep rhetorical potential exists, there is also a particular situation in the city which has been shown to be thought as problematic. Halle, as witnessed, has been described by persons from the city itself as in need of improvement of some variety. This is a 'situation' in which something must be done. For Halle to thrive, people need to be able to provision their lives there, despite the difficult situation presented. For people, the alternatives are modest social welfare benefits or simply leaving instead. Thinking about this notion of leaving for employment purposes, one poster on the HalleForum.de thread, made the following comment:

> Whether someone gains a foothold in Halle depends mostly on themselves. Whoever gets involved, has ideas and doesn't think too statically, can also have a life in prosperity in Halle.

'Getting involved' while also 'gaining prosperity', while it might sound like some entrepreneurial manual, actually simultaneously repeats the social dimension of the eastern German idiom. If there was one image thus far featured which represents this sentiment in this chapter it would be the smiling lady in the poster, creating prosperity by working with others. However, the comment also casts a further dimension into the debate about how to remain in Halle and be able to provision one's need – and it contains a certain irony given what has been seen above. If the anthropologist investigating the phrase 'thinks statically' were to search on Google, for example, for that exact phrase in its German original, one of the top results which contains this term is also linked to creating wealth, and the avoidance of such static thinking. The quotation is more typical of the manual for the entrepreneur:

> Whoever thinks statically and dares takes no step forward because they are scared of mistakes should not become a businessperson. (Gienke and dpa 2009)

The person from whom the quotation is sourced is involved in quite a different economic practice to the smiling lady on the poster above. Rather, it is German business magnate Werner Otto. The quotation from Otto is found in German *Manager Magazin* (Gienke and dpa

2009) who have written a profile on the event of his centenary after a most successful life in business. More particularly, the Federal Chancellor – easterner Angela Merkel – calls him a 'titan of business' as Berlin (as *Bundesland)* makes him an honorary citizen.

This magazine for businesspersons points out that in '1949, after an unsuccessful attempt at owning a shoe factory, he founded Otto-Versand', a catalogue company, 'and so laid the foundation stone for a worldwide trade and service company with tens of thousands of employees'. Looking at a list of its businesses, the group seems to have played its part in this research, with some of the clothes I wore during it being bought in its shops, and some of the data being transported back home by its logistics arm! Otto is thus a relatively well known and celebrated person. An article which is similar in content and message appears (because of the dpa, the national German Press Agency, origin) in the local Halle edition of the *Mitteldeutsche Zeitung*, Halle's paper of record ([n.d.] 2009h). There is a slight difference though in that it, in terms of content, devotes much more space proportionately to his benevolence, with a subsection entitled 'socially and culturally engaged'. The section above it, however, reveals an interesting coincidence, though. Otto was born in the eastern German Brandenburg. He set up his business in Hamburg after leaving what was to become the GDR as a refugee after WWII. After a personal *Wende* (WW2), where life changed utterly, and after a second *Wende* (failure), Otto seems to have adapted by not 'thinking statically'. Alongside having moved, Otto became wealthy, which would seemingly be incompatible with the socialist collectivist rhetoric as witnessed above. Rhetorically, however, Otto could easily invoke some vestige of the rhetorical dimension displayed on the poster of the lady. Like her, he is involved in the process of thinking collectively. Factually, and with due respect, in creating his wealth, he created the means for others to gain prosperity through jobs in his companies. It is clear that is an interesting rhetorical space, where elements of the 'eastern German idiom' (social thinking) have the large potential to mingle with the things that idiom often sets out to criticise.

On the topic of the social life of the entrepreneur, Hart states that if such a businessperson 'is to maintain effective links with his community, he has to maintain a balance in his career between private accumulation and collective consumption' (2000:105). If eastern Germans are said to place so much importance on sociality, it would follow that it would be of particular concern for the 'entrepreneur' in eastern Germany. Would the seriousness of the situation play some role in mitigating it? But might the act of becoming one be a difficult social task, and a difficult rhetorical one, in this particular situation? Might it be seen as too western? Mirroring this paradoxical ambiguity, yet moving onto the question of personhood, a *Times* journalist, German Oliver August, in a 1999 book describes a journey he had made along the former border between the FRG and GDR at that point, almost ten years after its removal. At one stage, he met two eastern German farming friends who rarely spoke. Despite their eastern childhood, they seemed typical expressions of eastern and western stereotypes, as one had indeed become a model, entrepreneurial capitalist after reunification. His friend complained that exposure to *Wessi* business practices had rendered him harsh and uncaring. In his own words, he said, very much in the eastern German idiom: 'If you do that for years, you start applying the same harshness when you meet your friends. It's impossible to separate work and private life' (August 1999:79). While his entrepreneur friend believed that 'I believe risk-takers deserve to make money. […] Let the market regulate prices', he also complains that:

> People are less sociable today. […] In the old days, boy, did we party. […] Now everyone has a full diary, too much overtime, people fear for their jobs, pressure from the boss, I guess from people like me. Everyone is tense. Always tension. (August 1999:77)

This thesis investigates how tension between the need to work and provision while becoming self-employed in Halle is rhetorically managed by the persons who engage in it. In the next chapter, I show however, how effort is made by the state and the media to change to create entrepreneurial, self-employed persons out of eastern Germans. In so doing, while I demonstrate how people are encouraged by various bodies and the media to become more like

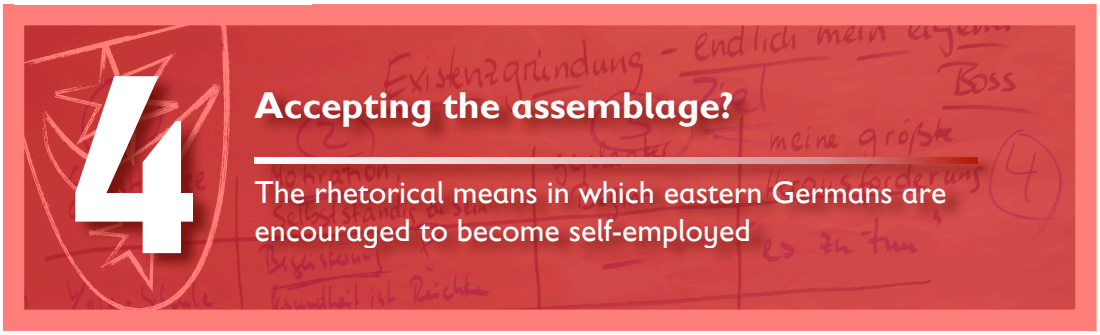
Otto, I suggest, from ethnographic experience, that a certain not-insignificant amount of the essence of the lady on the poster still however remains.

PART

2

Changing persons

The rhetorics of self-employment in eastern Germany



4 Accepting the assemblage?

The rhetorical means in which eastern Germans are encouraged to become self-employed

Introduction

> Dear readers!
>
> Difficult times produce courageous people. That is a comforting message because we live in difficult times: careers disappear, jobs are cut back, factories close almost overnight.
>
> The brave people however do not let themselves be dismayed. They trust their strength, creativity, their ability to perform and decide to set up their own business. That's what I call courageous. If you keep this book to hand, you're on the right path! (Opoczynski 2006:9)

This welcoming note to a guide to starting a business published by one of Germany's state broadcaster's consumer-rights and financial advice programmes sounds like a message for our times indeed. Although the book was published in 2006, such crises still seem now upon us more than ever. And indeed, given the email load I receive from my university's Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning, the journey down Opoczynski's 'right path' seems not far from mind in British universities where coming spending cuts may likely mean job losses. In any case, before hearing such exhortations, and of course researching individual startup businesspeople, the thought had not particularly crossed my mind. My Northern Irish family were all employees. This sets me off badly for major business success, according to the biographies of major businesspersons as analysed by Villette and Vuillermot (2009:73-74). In their analysis of

the life histories of extremely successful entrepreneurs, owning large companies such as Ikea, Wal-mart and AXA, the unifying characteristics in their *curricula vitae* were as follows:

- Raised in a business family
- Exceptional education compared to generational contemporaries
- Early personal introduction to business practices
- Benefitting from competitive advantages in comparison to others, and
- A mentor who intercedes, like some *deus ex machina*, at decisive junctures. (cf. Villette and Vuillermot 2009:73-74)

It is not just the writer of this thesis who has been in this position, however. Given the situation as described above in the GDR, it is no surprise that the majority of the subjects of this thesis are too. In this vein, not only have eastern Germans been faced with multiple economic and social crises as noted in the chapter above, but, according to the list of attributes above, the GDR economy itself would deprive many of them the chance of being in long-established business families and thus having an early access to business practices. Despite this, however, great rhetorical effort is made to encourage them to get onto Opoczynski's 'right path' towards self-employment. In this chapter, I will demonstrate how and in which circumstances this takes place. I will show how government, the press and universities try to mould eastern Germans into so-called 'business types' who can succeed in the modern economic climate. Based on analysis of entrepreneurship manuals and mass media magazines for a wider German audience I show how this becomes linked to individual persons and their morality. I demonstrate, however, that in an eastern German context, the message is adapted to account for the importance eastern Germans place on sociality. Further, based on my attendance at various courses designed for potential and new startups, I highlight that while eastern Germans may tacitly accept the need for self-employment, there still remains a certain potential for criticism of its practices when these conflict with eastern German social values. However, firstly, it is first necessary to consider the precise space into which this rhetorical effort flows. Thus the first question is whether the GDR as a state socialist society was as self-employment-free as might be expected.

The business type – plugins narratively assembled into 'mini-corporations'?

As noted in the previous chapter, the GDR was an economy where conditions were markedly different to those which would provide the chance to be raised in a business family, having an early introduction to business practices, among other things, as suggested in the list of attributes of successful businessmen by Villette and Vuillermot. Certainly, as seen above, in the GDR eastern Germans were introduced to working practices. However, the variety of 'business' Villette and Vuillermot refer to is the self-managing, entrepreneurial version not prevalent in planned economies. In 1990 there were relatively few persons in eastern Germany who had experience of self-employment, although it was not totally absent. The GDR was said to have earned 5% of its national income through a private sector, 'fairly sizeable' compared to other state socialist economies (Pickel 1992:79). In his account of GDR self-employment, Pickel suggests that

> the unresolved status of Germany in the post-war years [...] posed political obstacles to rapid nationalization, and forced the SED to be more sensitive than other Communist regimes to the social and economic consequences of fundamental restructuring. (Pickel 1992:9)

He then describes how, alongside the vast nationalised industries such as those seen in Halle, the 'GDR had an *institutional infrastructure* for the private economy which evolved over three decades' (1992:10, original emphasis). Despite this, there was unquestionably a political and economic movement towards state ownership. In 1988, there were 181,700 full-time self-employed persons in the GDR, including artisans, handicraft workers, retailers and wholesalers (Pickel 1992:78-89). However, while large in comparison to other state socialist economies, it is rather less than, for example, the (pre-unification) FRG had 2,319,000 in the same year (Haas 1992:16). This represented 12% of the FRG's workforce, while the GDR's equivalent rate was 2% (Schuh 1992:47).

While the figure of 12% seems comparatively high when compared to the state socialist economies, it was relatively low compared to Western states, with 22% in Portugal and 17% in Ireland, for example (Le Marois 1992:146). Despite this – once again – comparatively low figure, it was part of a growing trend in the pre-unification FRG towards self-employment as a means of dealing with unemployment (Haas 1992:11). After reunification, however, there had been a boom in startups, especially in eastern Germany. As there seemed to be adequate organic growth, a 1992 report by then-EC (now EU) training body CEDEFOP, could note 'there are few motivation courses [...] which encourage men and women to venture into self-employment (Haas 1992:38), and a 1994 report could find 'no programme devoted especially to promoting entrepreneurial spirit' (Letowski et al. 1994:16) based on a perceived lack of need. This has however, not been the case in the meantime. 'Difficult times' in the economy and the job market throughout Germany have resulted in many efforts by governmental agencies to encourage increasing numbers of people to become self-employed. A great deal of this effort was focused mainly – but by no means exclusively – on the unemployed. The most (in)famous programme was launched in 2003, as part of the root-and-branch reform of the social benefits system in light of persistent (and costly) high-level unemployment. These 'Hartz' reforms have bequeathed a word which is liberally peppered daily through the German press due to 'Hartz-IV', the fourth proposal which became law, concerning unemployment benefits. 'Hartz-II', the second, itself provided a further neologism in its official nickname, '*Ich AG*', perhaps best translated as 'Me plc'. This measure enabled the long-term unemployed to receive an additional contribution alongside their normal unemployment benefit in order to set-up their own, individual, business. A government brochure which was published to promote it does so by highlighting its potential for 'unlocking start-up potential in those who before had neither the courage nor the chance to realise their own business idea' (Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Arbeit 2004). However, it should be noted that being unemployed is not a pre-requisite for being targeted by such programmes.

For a thesis which is concerned with personhood, the quotation from the ministerial pamphlet above is particularly noteworthy. It appears that a certain type of person is being identified as the target of the encouragement offered in that particular case. This person has two characteristics: firstly, having had no chance to become self-employed, and secondly, lacking in the necessary courageousness. One of these characteristics is emotional and further carries a certain moral tone: the person is not courageous enough. Or rather, the overall message is 'not courageous enough *yet*', as the programme will allow this characteristic to be overcome. This focus on persons, and of their characteristics, is one which is quite common in the printed and online material I gathered in Germany on the topic of becoming a businessperson. In the book mentioned above one of the noticeable sections of the first chapter, itself entitled 'Core question: are you the type for independence?', is titled 'to set up a business means changing yourself' (Opoczynski 2006: 23). Much of the material I gathered is not specifically related to eastern Germany, but produced for the whole of the Federal Republic. And it seems that Opoczynski is quite adamant that Germans in general are in need of deep personal change. The persons he desires them to replicate are, perhaps unsurprisingly, Americans, who have no lack of courage in his opinion. After asking his readers if 'we in "old Europe" are mostly scaredy cats (*Angsthasen*)?', he decides that 'we' are, due to our heightened apparently old-European fear of failure in comparison to those across the Atlantic, where a positive figure of 'only' 29% believe that a business should not be setup when a risk of failure exists (ibid.: 11). Further, Germans are believed to be particularly deficient in comparison with the Irish. Although as an Irishman I am not convinced that the same would be true today, he positively notes that 'only' 25% of the Irish are scared of failure, while '75% gaze optimistically into the future' (ibid.: 11). Clearly, being the metaphorical 'scaredy cat' is something which one should change away from being while holding onto hopes of a positive forward narrative.

It would be patently unfair, evinced by a frank and detailed discussion of the problematic aspects, to accuse the writer of skipping blithely over the negative aspects of becoming self-employed, or the small chances of becoming extremely wealthy in early twenty-first century

business. He does attempt to disabuse his readers of the notion that entrepreneurship is an easy option, with a bullet point list of how the 'reality' stands in opposition to the 'aspiration' (ibid.: 17-19). However, the message remains compellingly pro-risk, pro-entrepreneurship, as the British get an honourable mention too having among their number more 'optimists' than 'pessimists' (ibid.: 12). In comparison, on an occasion where the quantification rhetorical use of 'only' is to highlight its negativity, he informs readers that 'only' 48% of Germans would take the risk when failure is a possibility (ibid.: 12). And the reader is shown a narrative of stages 'identified by scholarship' which begin with 'lack of perspective' in a position of employment, followed by a transformation, via stages of 'preparation', 'acting', and 'perpetuation' (ibid.: 24-25). This narrative ends with the optimistically-overtoned 'arrival at the goal', where 'earlier problems are forgotten and the new identity as an independent person has become part of the individual personality'. By then 'one sees the world through different eyes, has different values and has a different demeanour than in years past' (ibid.: 25). Further, they are stronger than the employed in facing economic and societal change.

The above narrative was presented in a section of the book entitled 'To set up a business means changing oneself' (ibid.: 23). There is a story being told of a certain type of person who has negative personal characteristics and practices. Through the unfolding of the narrative, this person loses these negative aspects while simultaneously gaining the positive personal characteristics and practices of a positive type. The person themselves has changed. This narrative aspect is alone interesting from an SRC point of view, and they are widespread. A very pertinent example, a visual story seed, is found on the front cover of a Belgian book entitled *Desire to do business? Triggers*, which shows a green shoot breaking through the background. The reader can envisage not only this beginning, but metaphorically the plant's – and a business' – growth. However, added to this narrative are *types* of characters which are provided to enable the proponents in the narratives to be envisaged by the reader and I suggest, increase the efficacy of the rhetorical effect. For example, the front cover of Opoczynski's book shows a nameless, but shirted, man – obviously a 'businessman' – on the

You need TURNOVER AND SUCCESS:

Entrepreneurial spirit	*Power to persuade*	*Result-orientatedness*
Motivation	*Networks*	*Reality awareness*
Seriousness	*Tenacity*	*Financial strength*
Activity		*Originality*
Time planning		*Passion, and a*
Goal-orientatedness		*Good business idea.*

Sie brauchen UMSATZ UND ERFOLG:

▪ **U**nternehmergeist	▪ **Ü**berzeugungskraft	▪ **E**rgebnisorientierung
▪ **M**otivation	▪ **N**etzwerke	▪ **R**ealitätsbewusstsein
▪ **S**eriosität	▪ **D**urchhaltevermögen	▪ **F**inanzkraft
▪ **A**ktivität		▪ **O**riginalität
▪ **T**erminplanung		▪ **L**eidenschaft und eine
▪ **Z**ielorientierung		▪ **G**ute Geschäftsidee.

Carmen Schön, studierte Juristin, ehemalige TV-Moderatorin (»Wir kämpfen für Sie« bei RTL) und Mitbegründerin von freenet.de, ist in einem Unternehmerhaushalt aufgewachsen und mittlerweile selbst mit ihren Firmen *juristische akademie* und *carmenschoen* erfolgreiche Unternehmerin.

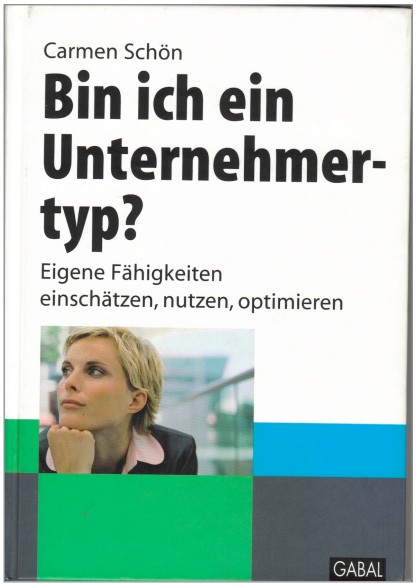


Fig. 4.1

Above: the acrostic for turnover and success, with the book's author pictured below. Right: the front cover shows a completely different person – an idealised type. (Schön 2008)

front cover. Another book in the genre, entitled *Am I the business type? Judge, use and optimise personal characteristics* (Schön 2008) shows a suited, blouse-wearing and pensive woman siting in a blurred out location (Fig. 4.1). Still recognisably 'business-like', its blurred, bland anonymity gives it great imaginative potential as its 'anyplace' nature creates a blank narrative canvas which allows a reader to imagine themselves sitting in such a location.

However, alongside these visual forms, equally interesting is that the necessary characteristics of such business characters are presented in list form. For example, from Opoczynski the reader learns that

> summarised, there therefore exist the following basic prerequisites for being a startup:
>
> - The inner motivation to do something in particular and to achieve
> - A positive attitude to the chosen tasks
> - A decent portion of trust in oneself
> - To see some point in the task
> - Courage for calculated risk
> - The knowledge and preparedness to learn to change oneself and to accept new things. (Opoczynski 2006:27)

Opoczynski even provides a checklist of 28 personal characteristics in order for the reader to judge themselves as 'strong', 'medium' or 'weak' in them (2006:28-29).[21] Schön goes further, and thematises such a list style by using an acrostic, a list formed from the initial letters of the German words for 'turnover and success'. Schön uses these as the headings for various sections in her book, however they actually appear even on the back cover (Fig. 4.1). Despite the adage advising avoidance of judging books by what appears in such places, it is a key location for the reader browsing for a book, and thus for the anthropologist to analyse it. Before presenting the acrostic, Schön claims there is a dearth of books of the 'how-to' type on the market. Rather, she suggests, the real need is for a 'what to be' volume instead. This list, although it has a number of items which relate to practical issues, such as having developed a business plan, is

[21] A further text (Nickel 2008:31-32) provides a quiz where point scores decide whether one is an 'entrepreneur', someone who is better in regular employment, or 'between the two stools'.

to a large extent a set of characteristics which are being ascribed to a successful person. The book will apparently give the necessary knowledge to gain these characteristics.

From a rhetoric culture point of view, in such lists, the person is to a large extent a character, who is placed into the change narrative as mentioned above. There are a number of interesting points which the list thus raises. Firstly, this sense of characteristics to be adopted is reminiscent of the 'plug-in' person which Latour (2005) has proffered based on actor-network theory, and further based on the model of the assemblage. This sense of collecting parts to make effective wholes he likens to 'discreet *pellets*, or, to borrow from cyberspace, *patches* and *applets*, whose precise origin can be "Googled" before they are downloaded and saved one by one' (Latour 2005:207, original emphasis). Humphrey, who both quotes Latour, and argues against his general view that individuals cannot be said to exist in themselves, asks in response, if there is no individual in existence then 'who does the composing, Googling and saving, and why?' (2008:365). I would point out here too that no 'app' is usable without an iOS or Android device to install and run it on. I am thus in agreement with Humphrey that anthropologists need to deal with individuals – not least because those in our research view themselves as individuals. The self-employed in Germany do not have the luxury to declare themselves basically non-existent that a French philosopher might. However, there is still something useful within the notion of parts of a whole. Rather, it is much more in alignment with Martin's conception of 'mini-corporations' (2000, 2007).

Martin suggests that individuals are encouraged to think of themselves, through the teaching and adoption of neoliberal economic principles, as entities 'oriented primarily to its own interests in global flows of capital' rather than 'citizens, oriented to the interests of the nation' (2007:42). In this, they should *think* of themselves as 'collections of assets that must be continually invested in, nurtured, managed, and developed' (2000:582). Here, these bullet-points are almost like shopping lists, or the tick-boxes of modern audit culture – but they actually are not, or not *yet*. It is not the case these things are never needed, and may become so at some

point if the *performance* leads to action being taken: if the reader becomes self-employed, they can be considered adopted and thus ticked off. It should not be overlooked that aside from the 'how to and how to be', the significant purpose of these texts is to *persuade* the reader to become self-employed. The list style is a means of making self-employment and the things necessary to engage in it seem a manageable task. However, whether one could indeed be persuaded that these things are able to be ticked off, and that the changes which such books suggest are (a) possible, and (b) desirable, in light of the difficulties self-employment can produce, is a different question altogether. In many senses, it would represent a considerable achievement if anyone did have all these positive characteristics. If it is necessary to make myriad changes in order to gain the required 'turnover and success' by assuming the said characteristics, for many persons these changes could easily represent a task which at least sounds discouraging in its intensity. This poses a further question. If it is necessary to change into a different type of person, is this particular model of a self-employed person morally desirable?

It may be a linguistic coincidence, but *Ich-AG* embodies this sense of person-as-corporation in its name. This was widely derided, being given the dubious honour of '*Unwort des Jahres*' ('anti-word of the year') by the Society for the German Language who described it a 'reduction of individuals to [something] on the linguistic level of a stock market' (Gesellschaft zur deutschen Sprache 2002). Even the otherwise business-friendly and liberal, weekly wide-circulation *Stern* magazine – from which, much more below – noted its name could potentially 'sound like selfishness and stock-market lasciviousness' (Röhrig and Halbauer 2003). Do people wish to become something which requires them to think individually, in a driven and focused way? Those criticisms of the *Ich-AG* concept were federal German criticisms. But what about the east? Firstly, the resurrected Monday demonstrations[22] against the Hartz reforms which still took place weekly during my fieldwork in 2008 and 2009 highlight that there is still some

[22] The demonstrations in Leipzig which helped bring about the *Wende* took place on Mondays, and thus the choice of day is culturally highly significant.

dissatisfaction. In Chapter 3 I noted Engler's contention that an 'eastern German idiom' can be used to criticise a lack of attention to social concerns at the expense of individual profit and highlighted that this idiom can be seen very much in use even today. Alongside this, there have been some particularly extreme examples, before the time of Hartz, of large corporations apparently placing profit before people.

Engler seems particularly indignant when citing various examples of such cases. He notes with disdain the indifference and arrogance with which workers in the Bergmann-Borsig generator works, 'shrinking' by 90%, were treated as it appears in a documentary film made at the time. He suggests that it was as if there 'were only midgets in the room' when workers asked managers 'How high must the profit, the rate of return, be for the owners and major shareholders to classify jobs as secure?' (Kasper and Schuster 1998 in Engler 2004:106ff.). Alongside this indifference to putting people before profit, Berdahl notes how easterners were targeted by unscrupulous capitalist salespersons from the west (Berdahl 1999:168-73). And on the level of Halle, it was discovered in 1991 that the western business advisor hired by the Halle authorities was corrupt, among other things siphoning off money from the town's social housing company (Grashoff 2008:67). Further, as noted by the CDU politician featured in Chapter 3, the abilities of eastern Germans have been questioned. Further, journalist August was told by a former Reichsbahn worker that when western railway workers had taken over, 'from one day to the next, all of our technology was consigned to the scrapheap. All rubbish, they said' (August 1999:48-49). In 1991, the report on training for start-ups in eastern Germany by CEDEFOP noted that take-up rates for courses was low due to feelings of job insecurity, and of fear of having to take decisions (Schuh 1992:74). It even cites a psychiatrist who has claimed eastern Germans are 'damaged' and that 'socialism makes them helpless' when faced with such events (1992:80). Such things are as motivating as being placed on the 'floplist' of cities: why get involved in this world?

Personalisation of the businessperson

Before moving onwards with eastern Germany, it is first necessary to return to a national German level in order to discuss a further rhetorical tool used by authors to render businesspersons into attractive characters, ones to be emulated. Until this point, there has been a focus on 'the businessperson' in the inchoate third person. The businessperson is defined by characteristics, and a 'he' or 'she'. However, these are persons who cannot be referred to as a 'he' or 'she' while simultaneously being called by their own, *known* personal name, such as a 'Hans' or 'Getraud'. However, there is an interesting pronominal shift which occurs in Schön's acrostic-using text. Indeed, it appears to be quite common in general in the material encouraging people to become self-employed. With Schumpterian overtones, the necessary abstract characteristics are shown functioning through a depiction on individual, named and successful persons. In Schön's case, it is she herself who receives the treatment in the introductory chapter. At that initial point, the reader learns of her family life in a business environment. While, for example, noting that she sometimes felt that her parents' business was an additional corporate sibling, the author is no longer merely a voice which instructs. Rather, she is transformed into a person who has a history, a narrative. To return to Schütz, here the writer of the book becomes more than a mere 'contemporary', someone one does not know personally, but by their social type or function, like here some abstract businessperson might be. Rather she takes on the form of a public consociate, persons 'who are known intimately' and whose life and 'one's fate is bound up with' (Carrithers 2000: 365), as described in Chapter 1. Alongside her photograph on the back cover, here, by giving us biographical information and being able to cast herself as an 'I', she makes herself into someone with whom we can empathise subjectively, and with her experiences.

In Schön's case, the 'the author' becomes a 'she', but not only an inchoate 'she'. Rather it is a public version of 'Carmen Schön'. She may be a businessperson, but still she is a real person, still capable of sociality. She has a (metaphoric) business sister, which shows that she has

Fig. 4.2

A very strong visual of the narrative of change into a businessperson is visible in these ministories about Saxony-Anhalt students who set up their own businesses, on a promotional bookmark. The 'ego' is actually an acronym, short for '*Existenzgründungsoffensive*', a 'campaign focussing on starting-up a business'.

emotions. In an intersubjective, if public sense, she becomes a temporary consociate. By this we should be persuaded that to emulate does not render us individualistic non-subjective beings. And the technique of personalisation, is not limited to authors' self-reflexivity, on the contrary. Villette and Vuillermot employ the same technique of personalisation in their analytical, academic text, which aims to highlight the more predatory nature of businessmen rather than their heroic characteristics. They likewise provide, as 'interludes' between chapters, the life and business stories of an individual businessman, or two, as explicatory material which makes the argument all the more easy to relate to (cf. Hamilton 2011) as these malevolent businessmen become temporary consociates we can relate to, if in a negative fashion. On the contrary, for example, I have learned much about my favourite chocolate manufacturer from *Desire to do business?* which calls upon the reader to 'inspire yourself by the experience of 15 Belgian

business creators!' (de Bray 2007). The impression given there is generally positive, likely something to do with the fact that the author has given the businesspersons the apparent freedom to write their own contributions. In any case, a link between narrative and inspiration to become a businessperson is explicitly expressed. Fig. 4.2, which shows a promotional bookmark from the Saxony-Anhalt regional government campaign to encourage people to start-up businesses, uses personalisation alongside a very visual representation of the change from students/researchers into the 'business type'. Clearly, wearing a suit means business.

However, it is the title of the Belgian book and the question embedded within it which raise a vital question, not unlinked to the question it poses, about this variety of advertising and texts. It is necessary to have a 'desire to do business' as a precondition of being in a situation where one is looking for a book called *Desire to do business??* It and the German examples I have referred to above were certainly available in general bookshops and would likely be found by someone searching for *a* book on becoming self-employed. To be in the situation where someone becomes a member of its audience by buying the text, or even lending it from a library, they will need to actively take steps to either purchase it or borrow it. This will naturally depend on the desire to want to read it, based on the already incubated notion or impulse to become self-employed. In some senses, much of the work of being persuaded that it is something at least good to do will have been made. Thus, the audience for such books is comparatively small. However, the technique of narrative-based personalisation of the self-employed occurs much more widely. A further book about German entrepreneurs, which contains nothing but, provides an interesting link between these relatively limited circulation titles for those who actively seek them out, and larger public publications.

Personalised businesspersons in public

The book which links the larger audience publications to the entrepreneur guidebooks is entitled *Gründergeschichten* (Osterkorn et al. 2007) (or 'startup stories'). It is a compendium of the

business histories of the winners of the *Deutscher Gründerpreis*, or 'German start-up prize', awarded annually to different businesspersons. It is organised by ZDF who published the first book mentioned in this chapter, alongside the Sparkasse banking group, Porsche, and *Stern* magazine. Yet, it was through reading *Stern* that I first encountered the prize, and I suspect most others would too, given that it had an average weekly circulation of 995,780 in the quarter in which the 2008 winners appeared (Q2 2008).[23] It is likely that in any case this medium provides the most detailed coverage of the prizewinners as their business and life histories are presented in the same fashion as in the books above. Alongside newer start-up

Fig. 4.3

A good pun: Leibinger is Trumpf, a company whose name can be translated as 'trump' (Flemming and Pielow 2008)

[23] Circulation data for *Stern* and *SUPERIllu* (below) is sourced from the Informationsgemeinschaft zur Feststellung der Verbreitung von Werbeträgern e.V. website at http: //daten.ivw.eu/ which does not use stable URLs.

companies, there is also a prize for 'life's work', and the winners throughout the years since the competitions inception in 1997 have very famous German businessmen among their winners, household names indeed such as Hipp of organic baby food fame, or Würth for his screws. Further, in a link to the previous chapter, Werner Otto, along with his son, won the prize in 2006 (Osterkorn et al. 2007:287). Two years later, when I was in Germany, the winner was Berthold Leibinger, of the Trumpf mechanical engineering company, who appears first in the issue (Flemming and Pielow 2008), as can be seen in Fig. 4.3. Notable in the heading of the article is the focus on invention, innovation, and Trumpf's expansion: 'he began as an apprentice, now he owns the firm', 'revolutionary invention', 'made into a world concern' (ibid.: 86). This is a narrative of his life. Yet it is combined with a business story of expansion, which itself is told at a fast pace.

His family life is mentioned, but a relatively humorous anecdote about how he told his father he would use his above-average intelligence to have to work at a less than average rate is tempered by stating the fact he has no hobbies, and a quotation from Leibinger that 'when normal people solve a crossword, I prefer to think about a technical problem' (ibid.: 87). The firm, even though it is a large corporation, is part of him, or perhaps the inverse, or perhaps he is that (one mini, now certainly not) corporation: 'Wherever he goes – he has travelled 80 times alone to Asia – he is Trumpf' (ibid.: 88). The dimensions are large, and the thoughts are of getting larger. The signs of neoliberal business practices' own expansion is demonstrated by the example given of an orchestra which was once acephalously anarchic but seemed to realise it needed a firm financial footing. The winner of another of the prizes for newer businesspersons, here the owners of Torqeedo, an electric motorboat company are also praised for their expansion: 'with their 25 employees' one of their boats is 'sold in 37 countries' (Gronwald 2008:94-95). It is noted that there is a possibility that life can sometimes be unjust for 'winner types' like Christopher Ballin, one of the owners. However, as successful persons in earlier life, the owners were able to invest €2M of their own private savings into the firm. It seems their experience of 'unjust' circumstances is somewhat removed from that of most people. Given this

Der Firmenname: »Schickes Altern«

Die Idee: Gisela Gehrmann (52) aus Potsdam ist freiberufliche Gerontologin, berät Ministerien, Behörden und Senioreneinrichtungen. Weil sie inzwischen selbst zur Generation »50 plus« gehört, wollte sie unbedingt etwas tun, um fit zu bleiben.

Der Erfolg: Seit 2005 ist sie Chefin der Firma »Schickes Altern«. Ihr Maskottchen: Eine Giraffe – Symbol dafür, dass man über den Dingen steht. Die Firmenräume sind ein beliebter Treff für viele Potsdamer von 20 bis 90 Jahren. Das Angebot: Sport, Gymnastik, Computerlehrgang, Skat u. a. (geringer Obulus bei Fachkräften). „Reich werde ich nicht, aber allen macht es viel Spaß."

www.schickes-altern.de

Fig. 4.4

'Chic ageing' with a giraffe in *SUPERIllu* ([n.d.] 2008f)

Filzwerkstatt in der Dorfschmiede

Die Idee: Britta Priebe (36, l.), gelernte Textilfacharbeiterin, und Bettina Schiesser (37), gelernte Bürokauffrau aus Röderau bei Riesa, waren lange Zeit arbeitslos, schlugen sich durch mit Mini-Jobs. Abends gingen sie ihrem Hobby nach, bastelten aus Filz lustige Handpuppen. Da hatten die Freundinnen eine Idee ...

Der Erfolg: Im Mai 2006 gründeten sie eine Filzwerkstatt, mieteten dafür Räume in der restaurierten Dorfschmiede. Ihre Produkte (Taschen, Hausschuhe ect.) verkaufen sie auf Märkten. „Es läuft prima, wir können davon leben", freuen sich beide. Inzwischen geben sie auch Kurse für Kinder und Senioren. **www.filzwerkstatt-roederau.de**

Fig. 4.5

Kissing bunnies in the felt workshop ([n.d.] 2008f)

lack of similarity between such 'winner types' and most people, it seems valid to question whether examples of such large corporate expansions headed by such people are the key to persuading persons to engage in entrepreneurship. Further, would Liebinger and his seemingly focused, and if not slightly eccentric, behaviour as presented be a model of the ideal person for an eastern German audience in particular? Would such individuals not be a target for the eastern German idiom as Engler showed in the 'shrinking' factory? A further example from the German press stable provides an interesting source of comparison.

Personalised businesspersons in public, eastern-style

Although almost twenty years may have passed since German reunification, and although there has been some vital debate within the academy about the value of postsocialism as a category, on a media level the category of the 'East' remains in existence. For example, the major German Sunday *Bild am Sonntag* tabloid features a weekly poll on a question with a 'yes/no' answer. The responses by respondents as percentages are displayed broken down into various categories, such as male or female, ages, education and, despite, representing approximately twenty percent of the population, the 'east' is represented as a category alongside the 'west'. This group has, according at least to one other media source, a 'central organ' (Staud 2000). This is the weekly news and lifestyle magazine, *SUPERIllu*, which in the same quarter as mentioned above had an average weekly circulation of 453,106. Assuming that its main audience is in the east, which considering its content focussing on eastern, often GDR-era, stars, discussions of the GDR past, and the beauty of the eastern landscape and its cultural heritage, is rather likely, this represents a much higher penetration rate than *Stern*. Given the incompatibility between the socialist personality of the past, which many of the readers might be said to have experience of, the *SUPERIllu* is surprisingly pro-entrepreneurship – extremely so. Indeed, it too runs its own annual competition for start-ups, sponsored by the federal development bank, and regularly features eastern businesspersons within its pages, praising them for their actions. The winners of the competitions are portrayed in exactly the same

format as those in *Stern*, namely detailing their life stories, seemingly on multiple occasions as the competition progresses. However, despite the similarities, there is a difference.

Firstly, these differences are detectable in the style of language used. Whereas there is a certain raciness, for the want of a better word, in the *Stern* examples, the *SUPERIllu* feels more homely, less showy. Further, the focus of the detail highlighted is likewise subtly different. In issue 19 of 2008, alongside an ongoing series of interviews with GDR-era, and reborn, rock band Die Puhdys, there is an article titled 'Great ideas! We are looking for more' ([n.d.] 2008f: 20-21). Therein, the business success stories of eastern Germans are presented in order to encourage entrants into the annual competition – and into self-employment. There is little mention of money at all in the story of one smiling lady (Fig. 4.4) who has set up a fitness business for the over-50s. Rather, it is noted her motivations were as she happens to be an over-50 woman herself and also wanted to keep fit. Posing beside the *papier-mâché* giraffe which acts as her logo , she claims 'I'll not get rich, but it is fun for everyone!'. Another duo of women were long-term unemployed, despite practical qualifications – a common eastern German phenomenon. It is noted they turned a hobby into a business making felt toys and they are quoted as claiming that 'It is going super! We can live from it'. This is a micro-narrative of success, like those viewed in *Stern*. Here, however, the tone is of provisioning sufficient means for existence, rather than of capitalist expansion. This is somewhat augmented by the accompanying picture of them smiling and holding two felt rabbits who are kissing one another (Fig. 4.5). A mention of a 20% increase in one of the featured firm's profits is tempered by the fact that it was after a management buyout which saved the firm from the 'danger' of takeover by Western German and US hands. There is a distinct thread of ending personal employment, or avoiding it happening to others, in the stories. Any hint of barefaced capitalist expansion is neutralised.

One year later, issue 17 of 2009 notes that a family who took over a former state cooked meats concern maintained 450 jobs and are praised for their high quality. The writers suggest

there was much courage, and also much communal effort, involved, with 30 of the former workers helping. The owner is reported as saying, 'we slogged away day and night. Everyone got stuck in. We could only have done it in that way'. The original German uses a particle verb with '*mit*-' prefix to added to '*anpacken*' ([n.d.] 2009e:8). Like the poster of the smiling lady in Chapter 3 which also used a '*mit*' in its verb, this highlights the joint action in this action of production, just as it was in the GDR. Issue 45 of 2008 further highlights the importance of community, found in an article on 42-year-old Volker Seifert, a village baker who used traditional recipes to become Saxony's 'bakery king' ([n.d.] 2008c:24-25). News of a new larger factory due to expansion is tempered by highlighting the social space in the new premises, which features a physiotherapist's room and a modern canteen, among other things.

There is a distinct narrative echo of the socially important 'multiplexes', the 'corona' *Kombinate* factory complexes which Engler was noted to describe as typical of the GDR. However, the image of social thinking is sustained further. Seifert's community-mindedness is further displayed through the noting of his organising three-day trips for his workers to places such as Berne, Strasbourg and Budapest to 'weld [them] together'. The firm is one where the informal second-person singular form of the verb is generally used, and that 'everyone should feel good by belonging to it'. But it is not only the workers he claims among those who benefit, but – note the communal pronoun – 'our' region and he is most pleased to able to play his part in it. In this connection, the magazine notes he pays €460,000 per annum in taxes. He is quoted as saying that if he had accepted a recent Western buyout offer for €16M, it would have 'put our workers up into the air. I couldn't do that to them and their families!'. There is a distinct difference between the depiction here and the callous western bosses in Engler's above. Further, reminiscent of the importance placed on the communal before the individual, the bakery king's reticence concerning his achievements is praised. He is cited as claiming he remains grounded, with the writer confirming that he has 'remained on the ground'. When asked why there are few honours on the wall of his office, he reticently replies that 'I am not the type for honours. I prefer to do well and not talk too much about it'. To top it all, he also gives to charity.

In these examples, there are various clear narrative echoes of the GDR past. There is the communal working, highly developed social linkages at the place of work, rejection of uncontrolled capitalism and of personal excess. The narratives are also clearly linked with the social values which were expressed by eastern Germans referring to western Germans. Indeed, expansion of personal wealth seems to have been acceptable when staving off threatened western expansion. Engler's 'east German idiom' seems always in the background, or rather, the avoidance of anything to cause readers to invoke it. Despite this, capitalist expansion is present in the articles, and the message is neoliberal in its overtones. Might easterners actually be accepting of these principles? Michael Warner's conception of publics and 'counterpublics' (2002) is useful here in approaching this question. Publics are viewed as self-assembling groups of people, who by dint of being formed by the purchasing or reading a publication of some sort which is a locational-independent act, cannot know each other. Despite the fact they are personal strangers, they can envisage what other members of that public are like, because in some way they likely – albeit it could be imagined – resemble themselves. When considering the examples of the startup manuals at the beginning of this chapter, I described how the books seemed to present the ideal set of characteristics a businessperson should have. To a large extent, this allows the creation of a character of the ideal businessperson. Similarly, readers imagine what other readers of their public are like. Warner also notes that publics require 'a concatenation of texts through time (Warner 2002:90) and thus have an ongoing nature. Thus, to become a member of a public and to remain so, the persons so imagined have to be sufficiently congenial to that reader. This imaginary reader is constructed on the basis of their impression of the content.

In other situations, it would otherwise often be possible to view the readership of the *SUPERIllu* as a *counterpublic* in the sense that it covers eastern German themes, aimed at eastern Germans who have long felt somewhat estranged and ambivalent to many aspects of life in the reunified Germany. But here the *SUPERIllu*-reading public is seemingly accepting one of the basic tenets

of that original public. The message presented, and apparently accepted, is convergent with that of *Stern* which has an aimed public throughout all parts of the Federal Republic. Normally they would be viewed as countering the whole-German public due to their dissatisfaction and alienation with what it represents (cf. McFalls 1999). Here, with the presentation of these startups, the reader is presented with persons who it is suggested by the writers should be seen as worthy members of the *SUPERIllu* public. Alternatively, there is at least the suggestion that it is good for members of this public to look favourably and with admiration upon such persons. And given purchasing the publication is naturally voluntary, and circulation figures remain steady, the suggestion must be that their presentation does not offend readers to such an extent that readership is affected.

It seems from this image, with the ongoing promotion of startups in its pages, and the annual competition, that members of the eastern German *SUPERIllu*-reading public are thought to believe it is good to become an individual owner of the means of production, make money, expand and better your situation. These make you a good person because you are brave, and work hard, and are unflappable in situations. However, it is good if while doing so you improve the situation of others, are reticent about your success, you provide good quality compared to others. Further, it is also good to promote eastern German interests by keeping larger, western firms at bay, and compete against concerns larger than you. This is a message which contains two meta-themes: capitalist success is encouraged, but while doing it, working hard and do not exceed accepted norms, where those resemble the characteristics which eastern Germans are said to have gained during the GDR. In general, *SUPERIllu*, to me, feels remarkably in tune, or sensitive, to what they can publish for their public. When they published a story by an eastern celebrity who said he enjoyed being a GDR citizen, and editorially stood rather behind the position, they could within two weeks change positions by publishing readers' letters against the first. Further, *SUPERIllu* organises readers' panels, which aim to give their readers a consultative voice in the editing process. And indeed, two weeks after the article on the 'bakery king' appeared in *SUPERIllu*, a reader's letter was published about him. Its writer

'does not begrudge such capitalists their success' due to their tax paying and social responsibility among other things. This is in stark contrast to the the 'turbocapitalists' who '[Seifert] could tear strips off' (Rotekirch 2008:18).

Assemblages from east and west

In some senses, as stated above, the positivity in the *SUPERIllu* position as regards this once alien and capitalist activity can be viewed as surprising. However, there are certain factors which actually render it less so. Firstly, it is interesting to note that the long-term editor of the publication, Jochen Wolff, hails from the West, having grown up in Bavaria, a fact that many people I spoke to during fieldwork were unaware of. He is quoted as having published a string of 'I-did-it-this-way-stories' because of his desire to 'show the people that one can be successful in this country' (Staud 2000). The author of the article which quotes him also notes the possibility that his policy of treating eastern Germans with 'respect, love and understanding' might sound patronising. And while the author notes that *SUPERIllu* might be seen as being replete with 'ideal-world stories', Wolff calls such items 'courage giving', which is not removed at all from the task of entrepreneurship manuals such as those shown above. In some senses, however, *SUPERIllu* could not be other than 'courage giving'.

The magazine, as the author of the article claims, may be 'central organ of the east'. Yet, he also suggests that no other publication 'does more for German unity' and further 'leads easterners into the new country'. It is the *kairos* of the 'new country' which is the key in this. It is clear that the 'situation' in eastern Germany has been changed by events which brought about this 'new country'. Carrithers has analysed an example from a 1994 biography where a woman, Petra, 'sets out some moral conceptual landmarks for herself and for her family' at reunification, where 'concern for one another's interests, devotion to one another, consideration, uprightness' are deemed as still important in 'the new setting' of the Federal Republic (2000:377). Moral positions have to be adapted, to be sure. However, the basic moral

stance as seen in the GDR is kept. The *SUPERIllu* position on entrepreneurship is rather in the same vein. It is mostly 'new country' but also a bit of 'central organ'. The wider situation and its characters are too.

Wolff may be western, but the article notes encroachments of 'easterness' in his accent and his views on eastern music, among other things. One might argue that Wolff is a '*Wossi*', a combination of *Ossi* and *Wessi*. '*Wossi*' is used as a synergysing combination, for example, in the 1980 (eastern) edition in the *Born In…* series. One of its sections detailing the collective post-*Wende* experience is entitled 'Out of "Ossis" become "Wossis"' (Ludeck 2009:40-49). The Petra whom Carrithers has written of, and to whom I referred above, showed some synergysing of this nature, but not enough time had passed in 1994 to become a '*Wossi*', if her age ever permitted her to become one. In comparison, the *Stern* competition also offered a prize for companies set up by school pupils. Matching population proportion, two out of the ten were in the new *Bundesländer*. These young people would have the chance, and perhaps their success shows they had. However, despite this synergysing, the eastern-German-idiom-imbued criticisms of the west and its capitalism as viewed above were shown to have come from young, technologically-literate computer users, among others. It should not be forgotten that while Petra, the 1980 cohort, and the school prizewinners, for example, would be eastern *Wossis*, Wolff is a *western Wossi*. If the post-reunification Federal Republic is anything on the *Wossi* scale – and it must be something because even western persons have complained about some of the changes that unification brought (cf. Biller 2009) – it is still more akin to Wolff, significantly more western *Wossi* than eastern. The relative size of the populations, the means of reunification where federal law was supreme as the east joined rather than merged with it, among other things, suggests to me that any latent desire to use the word hybridity is not the most appropriate.

In search for a better term to describe self-employment in the new Federal Republic, I prefer the sense of 'assemblage', as in Collier and Ong's conception of 'global assemblages' (2005). In this

case, the Latourian-inspired notion of assembling is of much more use than it was for describing personhood. Collier and Ong adapt the idea of Latour's 'immutable mobiles' (Latour 1987:227) to suggest that 'immutable' standards and broad ideological practices are placed into different, and differing, places within the world. These are global, in that they are 'broadly encompassing, seamless, and mobile' but also assemblages which 'impl[y] heterogenous, contingent, unstable, partial, and situated'. This, as they note, 'suggests inherent tensions' (Collier and Ong 2005:12) because they have to be combined into assemblages in local conditions. In many senses, one must do the same things; the same risks are required (if at different intensities). Thus, as eastern Germany has, on a federal level, the same regulatory and financial system as the rest of the country, entrepreneurship and self-employment cannot be particularly different in eastern Germany from anywhere else, local government notwithstanding. I do not renege on my earlier view that assemblages are appropriate models with which to understand a conception of personhood, as will be seen below. However, in *metaphorical* terms the assemblage is a useful tool in helping to envisage how neoliberal economic practices are applied in eastern Germany, as well as anywhere else.

If the assemblage is accepted as a metaphor, it further shows the relevance of that rhetorical tool in persuasion. It is an example of where academic theory is imbued with metaphors in its models to persuade, as was witnessed in the realm of economics. This should return attention to the importance of persuasion in effecting change. The economic changes after the GDR's subsumption into the Federal Republic have created a situation in which people in the east are required to engage in self-employment. It seems that, at least at the public level as represented by *SUPERIllu*, it is something which can have a certain amount of eastern-ness assembled along with it. While broadly the same as anywhere else, eastern German-ness only finds its place where the standards, laws and neo-liberal practices allow them leeway. While the eastern view of self-employment and entrepreneurship in *SUPERIllu* does appear to have such an assemblage character, is it the case *in situ*? How does this actually appear at the cutting face of entrepreneurship as taught in 'real life' coincide? A reader's letter can criticise 'turbocapitalists',

but it will be editorially chosen by the publication, and may be modified. What occurs when people are permitted to speak out? From attending various voluntary seminars and talks for entrepreneurs in my fieldwork site of Halle, and one in Hanover in the west, along with interviews with course organisers, leaders and participants as part of broader fieldwork, I would suggest that there is a similarly assembled mixture of standard (western) messages mixed with easterness when there is opportunity for it to budge in. In what follows, it will be possible to view what happens when the message meets those to whom it is addressed.

The assemblages in formation

Before moving to contrast them, it is important to firstly consider the similarities between events in Halle and Hanover. There was focus in both places on the great effort needed in order to succeed, and the need to keep going, for tenacity. There was indeed hope that expansion would occur, but the reality that failure is possible was raised. The course leader in Hanover advised her participants that buying a flash car now that one feels one is a businessperson, and thus wasting valuable money, is to be avoided. The same piece of advice was repeated to me in an interview by one of the eastern German startup coaches. She told me that she advised her charges to avoid cars as the trappings of being a businessperson.. Alongside this reticence of image, there was a concentration on networking, which is always seen as essential, vital, as well as marketing and making customers. Further, reflecting that tax and business law is mostly a federal affair, any content on legal issues was broadly similar in its content. The differences between the courses, can be seen however, and these were in terms of atmosphere, tone and participant reaction. It is thus time to introduce some eastern aspects into the assemblage.

Even in terms of the atmosphere of the courses, there was a noticeable difference in teaching and participation style. Remaining firstly with the subject of financial law, one particular seminar in Halle on the complexities of the tax system – led by an accountant and organised by

one of the state-sponsored coaches – allowed one characteristic, held to be particularly east German, to be viewed. This is that easterners were used to being led by the hand during the GDR era, and did not like to make their own decisions – as noted in the EU CEFEFOP report mentioned above. It appears they still are now, according to another eastern entrepreneurship coach to whom I spoke. However, returning to the course on tax, its leader even explained how, in very detailed and practical terms, to purchase the software required – down to the level of going into the shop, and actually what to say and in what tone. Although the course was informal and friendly, the participants remained reticent. This did not mean they were silent by any means, but, for example, when asked to introduce themselves they provided very simple self-descriptions, which were quick and far from elaborate. The course leader in Hannover met with no hesitation when she asked her audience of twelve to introduce themselves their plans and ideas. Even the few who seemed shy were relatively comfortable in so doing as these were placed on a large piece of paper at the front of the room, as can be seen in Fig. 4.6.

This sense of eastern reticence was to be viewed further. I have mentioned above that eastern Germans have been regarded as being particularly lacking in the characteristics and abilities needed to succeed in self-employment, the variety of items as might be placed upon the lists witnessed at the beginning of this chapter. I suggested that this has rankled. Therefore, I was shocked when this was even thematised by a different course leader during his session in Halle. During the session on 'the key to success in marketing', this Dutch businessman who lived elsewhere in Saxony-Anhalt asked for a volunteer to introduce themselves and their businesses. He had described a well-known technique for successful introductions known as the 'elevator method'. It is called this as such a short period is all that is available to present oneself and one's business to someone in such a conveyance: a period of thirty seconds. This is, to all extents, a shorter version of the panegyric narrative texts as encountered above in *Stern* and *SUPERIllu*. The difference here is that it is produced by the main protagonist in that text, in the 'I' form, and 'live'. However, when asked to practise this, no-one out of the even larger group agreed. During an interview this seminar convenor later noted that in his experience it is

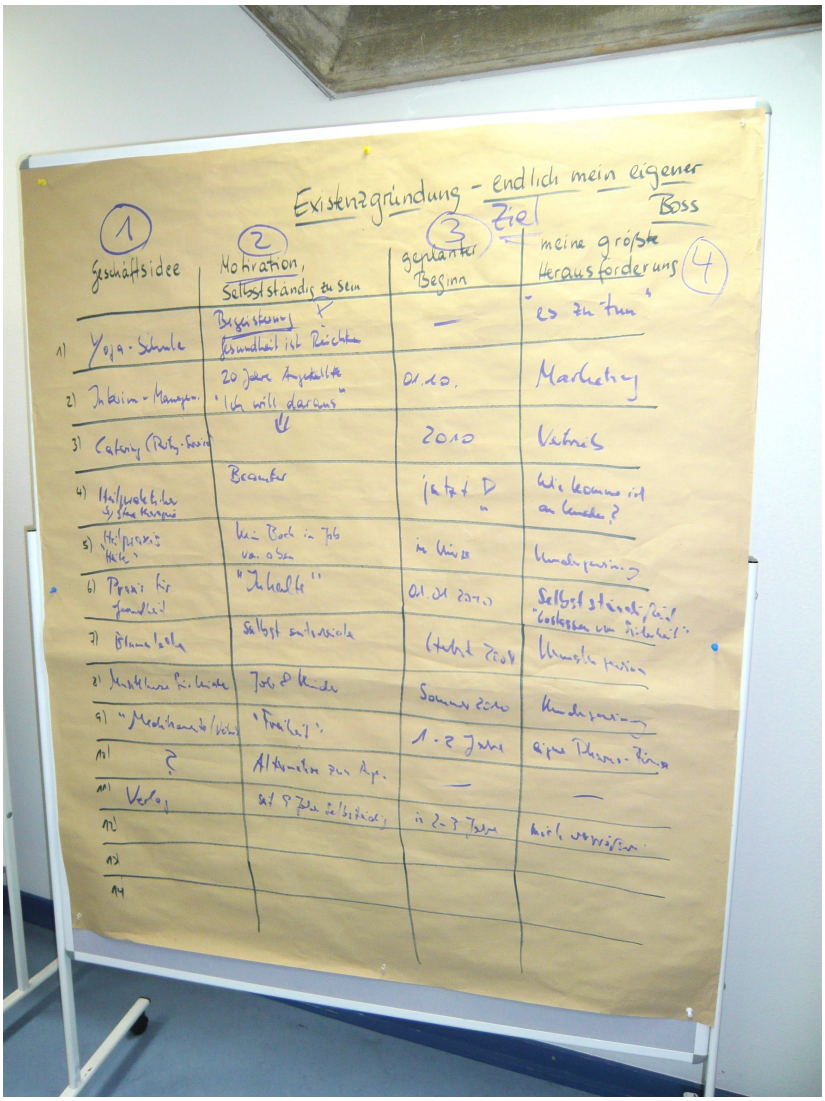


Fig. 4.6

The people who attended a course on starting a business in Hanover had no qualms in having their plans and fears publicly displayed.

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particularly hard to get anyone to volunteer in any case, but in the east it apparently never happens. I had asked him about this aspect because during the session he had told the participants that eastern Germans are particularly 'bad' at 'selling themselves' and their talent, a further perceived deficiency of reticent eastern Germans. At that point, there had been some murmurs of discontentment from around the room, but the coach who organised the event, and the leader of the town's entrepreneurship bureau who was also present, told me during interview that they agreed.

I had the opportunity to discuss this event on a later occasion with this entrepreneurship section leader. It appears that the *kairos* of the situation has a large part to play in understanding the term 'selling oneself'. The municipal official suggested that it has different significance and connotations in eastern and western Germany, and this relates to the dishonest western businesspersons who came to the east after reunification, as mentioned above. He suggested that there was likely a suspicion that an 'overselling' or perhaps 'mis-selling' of one's abilities and competences was being suggested. Mentioning the unscrupulous westerners who came and defrauded easterners, he suggested that people still remember the time very well. Explicitly linking this deception through inflation to the phrase of selling oneself, he described them as having '*really* sold themselves'. He further believed that the memories of this period have been particularly persistent. Despite this, he was positive that through time 'the wheat has been separated from the chaff' and many honest western people have come and conduced their business without any question over the honesty. In SRC, this idea of 'selling oneself' can be described as a good example of a cultural item which, here, despite semantic similitude, has the potential to allow eastern and western listeners to place it into very different narratives and personhood schemes. I suggest it thus also functions very well as a 'story seed'. And even if the experiences of Berdahl's informants shows how unpleasant this selling could be, and the strength of the displeased reaction thereto, the passing of time and changing circumstances have allowed a tacit acceptance of the need to present oneself better to develop in this situation in Halle.

Despite the entrepreneurship bureau leader's acceptance of the need to 'sell oneself', it is significant that someone whose paid employment is to buy into such message displays a concern for honesty in one dealings with others. What evidence of such thinking can be seen from the floor of these events, other than introductions and disgruntled murmurs? During interviews with two participants of this particular course, a lawyer, there to improve her business, and someone who was thinking of setting up a graphic design company, I asked if they had tried

practising their elevator introductions. And indeed they had, and found it useful. No doubt, today it is practical and useful advice, but still we see assembled into this some sense of eastern values. The graphic designer recognised that it was difficult, she could see eastern reticence in herself and her brother, and it would be difficult to internalise. But family and friends could provide practice opportunities, because with them nothing could go wrong. Away from the public gaze, it could be perfected and honed. The lawyer in turn surprised herself with her own ability to manage it. But she told me that Westerners would be much more boastful about their achievements in such a task, and pointed out that the refusal when people in the course were asked to introduce themselves, resulted from the feeling that it is somehow almost indecent in the east to show that one has what it takes ('*etwas drauf haben*') to succeed. Further, people, and customers, appreciate the reticence, and this was visible during the courses themselves.

At the beginning of this chapter I mentioned that the university at which this thesis is written offers free courses to encourage entrepreneurship, and the local universities in Halle did likewise. As part of a wider programme of support under the name *Univations*, they offered courses on various topics. I was able to attend some of these, particularly those held in the local art university. In terms of expansion, of gaining new customers, the leader of one of these courses on intellectual property protection was quite clear that as a lawyer her services were in most cases quite unnecessary – there was no visible touting for business. This was not the case by any means at the course led by the Dutch management consultant, who sent out his details afterwards, even after plastering his name and logo all over his slides. At the time I wondered if a malfunction with the PowerPoint presentation, and a promise to distribute it later, was not merely a ruse to harvest email addresses from these potential customers! Even if not, the opportunity to offer his services was not missed, and neither was it at the end of the course. He 'sold himself' quite well, and could present the narrative of his personal and business development with ease. In comparison, at the course mentioned above in Halle on accounting, the instructor was quite adamant that participants had no actual need of her services, and that they could do all their own bookkeeping. But this seemed to gain her customers, as several

people came up to her voluntarily at the end to request the very thing. Her strong personality, competence along with this reticence, mirroring the presentation of entrepreneurs in *SUPERIllu*, seemed to be much more likely to cause her services to be used.

A further example, which again highlights the theme of personal integrity and honesty as in that of the municipal official, occurred during a course on advertising. The instructor, a postdoctoral researcher from the town's main university, provided examples of negative advertising as suggestions of innovative thinking, which could be emulated. After he keenly gave examples of negative advertising – such as accepting other firm's vouchers (and thus save on printing costs) or imitating a long-established hairdressing salon's retaliation against a new cut-price competitor across the street when it put signs offering the service of rescuing people from cheap haircuts, one hand went up. A young lady asked, with much incredulity, if such practices were acceptable, or even permitted? During the same session, it was also suggested that it was a good idea to set one's prices high because the general public generally cannot guess the prices of products, and this should be taken advantage of. However, a local felt product maker told me that she can get much higher prices for her products in Berlin, especially among the western tourists at markets in Potsdam, but keeps her prices at almost break-even level in Halle because she feels sympathy for those persons in Halle who otherwise would have no chance of affording the objects they desire. This could be interpreted at a pinch as elaborate and contrived warehouse clearance. However, even if the concept of 'mouth propaganda' advertising was regarded as being at play, I suspect that the social networks of such customers likely contain those on similar incomes rather than higher-paying customers. If anything, it was likely to be in the importance of 'love and humanity', the virtues she attributed to a local patisserie and café she recommended to me. For her, the attention to detail and care when choosing the ingredients for their cakes, and their manufacture, made their elevated prices worthwhile. From her talk of customers being able to 'purchase some spirituality', of care and attention from the heart, alongside these products, and from watching her demonstration of felt making I believe she showed a similar level of careful thoroughness, which quietly emphasises her own product

pricing policy even further. Unlike the possibly staged and twee kissing bunnies in the *SUPERIllu* display of her felt-making professional colleagues, her tone is of genuine caring.

From socialism to consociationalism

As a means of concluding this chapter, and setting the course for the next, it is necessary to consider what has been revealed by the examples presented here. Firstly, it is clear that self-employment in eastern Germany is a 'global assemblage'. This has been built up as the changing regulatory and legal framework of the Federal Republic has been adopted in the east, and eastern Germans have adapted to it. This was detectable in the training courses and seminars I attended. There seemed to be an acceptance of the need to engage in capitalist practices. However, this was tempered by their questioning of certain practices, namely those which would be particularly extreme examples of capitalism, which were questioned and commented on. These mirror the values which the socialist person in the GDR was supposed to have, and were persuaded to have. What is particularly interesting, however, is that these values are creatively used to encourage people to engage in self-employment by an eastern German publication. These persons are placed into narratives of success, tempered by social thinking. These may be third person narratives, even with quotes from the person described. In so doing, readers are given the chance to become temporary consociates of the businesspersons, and to imagine that we could be like them. Thus, there is creativity involved in narrating, and to boost its persuasive, rhetorical effect. This has two implications.

The first concerns the nature of personhood in the east. It is clear, given that time has advanced onwards, that a 'socialist personality' as a concept is something historical – in chronological terms if nothing else. However, the acceptance of certain aspects of capitalism and economic individualism seen here shows that certain aspects which were regarded as important parts of it are no longer apposite by any means. Thus, the positive values it was supposed to have can be seen sustained in the *SUPERIllu* presentation of the businessperson as

ideal types. Even if these persons are engaged in capitalist practices they maintain a social side. There seemed to be hints of this in the seminars and courses I attended in Halle as well. Not all aspects of the socialist personality are gone and thus, rather than abandon it completely even after twenty years, an adaptation is what is required in order to describe what is being displayed in these situations. To mirror Geertz's conception of personhood in Bali, where he suggests people render others as contemporaries to deal with events in social life, I suggest that eastern Germans display what might be described as 'consociational personhood'. There are certain similarities between it and the former socialist personality. There remains a sense that others must be considered, and that these other people should be treated more as consociates than contemporaries. This does not mean that people must be more socially familiar with others. Rather, I suggest there is a sense that people should be treated as if their needs were closer to those of your consociates. Thus, respect, social thinking, generosity, putting people before profit are held to be paramount. However, the second implication requires movement away from the original Geertzian idea. I contend that this is not a static, bound sense of personhood, but one which can be used strategically and rhetorically and changes over time. It can be used in narrative but can also be practically useful as the eastern course leader's gaining of customers showed. However, this depends on the situation, and it depends on the *kairos*. In the next chapter I will show, based on my interviews with businesspersons on a one-to-one basis, how its expression changes in a different situation, and in extended personal narratives.

5 Making the change?

The importance of the consociality in the business and life histories of eastern German self-employed people

Introduction

It is clear that people make assumptions about others based on their professions. It will be recalled that Linde suggests, 'one's occupation is a publicly available piece of information, from which many inferences may be drawn as to what sort of person one is' (1987:346). Therefore, she further posits that 'it is so relevant to self-presentation' and also 'forms a relatively public portion of one's biography' (ibid.). Given the self-employed person's role as the sole provisioner of their needs, and that they make their own choice to engage in it, and choose how to conduct their business, this is especially the case. Whereas in the previous chapter, it was the media who presented the stories of businessperson, in this chapter, based on semi-structured interviews, I present the ways some eastern German self-employed people *themselves* talk about their lives and careers, the ways in which they became businesspeople, and how they operate in their professional lives. Firstly focussing on the life and business story of one man as told to me, I then analyse to what extent the themes he mentions appear in similar stories told to me by other self-employed persons I met in Halle. Based on their content, I show how eastern Germans rhetorically combine various cultural items from seemingly incompatible domains when faced with the 'global assemblage' (Collier and Ong 2005) of self-employment in eastern Germany. Further, I suggest that the large extent to which the importance of social thinking is highlighted by interviewees provides more evidence of an eastern German consociational personhood – in general, and among these businesspersons. However, I suggest that the extent

to which this is expressed depends on the situation involved, and that businesspersons can use this strategically to succeed in their business endeavours.

The ethnographic interview: life and business in stories

Methodologically, the interviews I used to gather the data I present in this chapter were of the semi-structured variety. Indeed, this particular form was one of the main research methods I employed when approaching my research topic in general. I expanded on the reasons for this in Chapter 2. However, some further comment is required here because the nature of the interviews themselves affects (positively, I argue) their style, content and value as a source of data. There is a certain formality, of course. Agreeing with Hockey (2002), in Chapter 2 I suggested that ethnographic interviews, because of their commonality with other types of interview, can provide the anthropologist with the chance to 'learn engagedly' inside the world of the self-employed person. I could witness the working environment: the files sitting on the desk, the diary and telephone book, the computer, the coffee machine, the flour and the oven, among many other things. I also suggested it is possible to observe how businesspersons interact with other businesspersons and with authorities in formal situations. This is indeed the case. However, it becomes clear I am not a 'business school'-type expert who belongs to this particular world and who is there to judge their abilities. Therefore, over a longer interview, rapport may indeed build and relaxation increases. It is not completely natural, to be sure, as we may hardly know one another. Yet the chance to discuss topics close to their hearts, their experiences, under the relative safety that anonymity and professional ethics bring, is one which is often appreciated. The interview moves closer to what a normal conversation might be. Much more can be discussed, in a more revelatory manner.

A part of this also relates to the content. In order to gain as much information as possible on a broad range of topics, my question lists were designed to maximise this possibility. Although I adapted and moulded the list depending on the sector in which the interviewed person worked,

and honed the list through experience, there was a core set of questions which I generally asked to tall. This core included details on which activities their self-employment involved, the working conditions and hours, or if they had much contact with other self-employed people. An important question related to how they had decided to become self-employed, or how it occurred. This tended to happen towards the beginning of the conversation. Regularly, this 'business history', even if its telling began with present events, would regularly jump chronologically backwards, and events from their past lives, not only concerned with work, would be recounted in some chronological order. This might sound like a classic 'life history'. However, collecting a 'life history' was not the purpose nor outcome of the interviews. These were not recognisably chronological life history narratives. The content would jump back and forward to practical matters, skills, other stories, business events and principles among other things. My questions might mean a flow was broken. The order of questioning varied greatly depending on the flow of conversation and in meeting the tone of what was being said.

Despite the chronological and topical non-linearity of the interview content, it is still however possible to build a narrative from these events. These are not 'life histories' in the conventional sense. I recognise creating such a narrative of someone's career, embedded within their lives in general, has a certain similarity with a biographer. In any case, that would be *my* task and not the interviewee's. Rather, what they told me contained parts of what Linde (1987, 1993) terms a 'life story', as opposed to a 'life history' or (auto)biography. For Linde, a life story has to be something which is both told for the purpose of referring to events in someone's life, and further something which can be told at different times while still being relevant. Thus, events told to me during an interview can fulfil both these criteria while being told as part of something else. Extracted from this other content, a stream of events can be pieced together, if necessary, into a coherent narrative. I will do so below for a self-employed person, Ralf, whose 'life story' is particularly interesting.[24] I suggest that Ralf, as one of the most interesting of my informants, offers a fascinating starting point from which to identify the possible themes from a broad

[24] The names used in this chapter are fictional, for purposes of anonymisation.

possible range of domains from which the life and business story of an eastern German self-employed person might be created.

I had met Ralf, the protagonist of the story, because the Internet connection I shared with the students in the flat next door was not working once again. As the modem-router was located in their apartment, I was at the mercy of their being present, or otherwise, when a fault occurred. After experiencing a few months of this intermittent service, I decided once and for all to investigate an independent supply. By pure coincidence, while waiting at the pedestrian crossing where Leipziger Strasse meets Hansering and Waisenhausring, I looked up and noticed that the massive advertising hoarding for an out-of-town branch of an international electronics chain mentioned a special offer. The shop would not only provide expert and independent advice on internet connections, but pay the bus fare there. Never having been there before, and being offered the chance to go for free and perhaps find some special offer, I decided on the spot to go straight away. Ralf was the Internet advisor whose presence was promised by the advertising hoarding. As might be expected from the purpose of my visit, he offered me advice on choosing the correct internet connection. However, my initial thought that Ralf was employed by the shop in which he was working was incorrect. Ralf was self-employed, and had had a very long history of self-employment, however fraught and complex it had turned out to be. Having had a pleasant and useful chat, I dared to ask for an interview – my first – and he invited me to his home, where Ralf's 'life story', as reconstructed below, was told. Although it might have certain generic similarities with the stories of success which appear in *Gründergeschichten* (Osterkorn et al. 2007), *Stern* magazine or even self-penned *Envie d'entreprendre?* (de Bray 2007), the story I present has some marked differences.

The story of Ralf – the committed capitalist

Ralf is in his early fifties and was born in Halle. He has lived all his life in the city and professes a great love for it. He went to school there, gained his school leaving certificate and returned

to the city after spending his compulsory year-and-a-half in the *Nationale Volksarmee* (NVA), or 'National People's Army'. He found this military experience distressing, mentally and physically hard. Preferring not to talk about it in too much detail, Ralf said he 'saw many men cry there'. He returned from military service, did his professional training and went on to work in the data processing centre of a major GDR state concern. There he met his wife, whom he married after three months. He progressed within the organisation and was given the chance to study part-time, with one week per month spent at a technical institute in a different area of the GDR. Apart from living expenses, the state paid for this opportunity. Ralf repaid this through collective effort, in both the social and working aspects of his life. As part of a team, he was presented with a collective '*Banner der Arbeit*' medal by Erich Honnecker for their saving of many millions of marks through computer modelling of efficiency measures.[25] He was involved in the SED, including the FDJ. However, his relationship to the party was not smooth, having been once faced with disciplinary procedures which he claims resulted from his continual 'making waves'. As a result of his 'telling his comrades the truth', he was not always popular. However, he was committed and involved. This went on until the *Wende* came. Anticipating the likelihood that the multiple regional processing centres would be redundant, Ralf decided to diversify his economic activity lest he himself should face a similar fate.

To do so, through a friend of his wife who had been part of the refugee camp in the Prague embassy of the FRG in the summer of 1989, and had moved to the Rhineland after fellow Halle-born FRG foreign minister Genscher's negotiations, he and his wife began to sell insurance. The GDR was a massive untapped market, as insurance was offered only by a state-owned company. When the feared closure of the data processing centre did occur, Ralf and his wife began to do this full-time, and as he noted he 'registered the business together with my wife, fire and flames and let's go'. Things did not run smoothly, however. In the previous chapters I referred to the dishonest western businesspersons coming to the east in order to defraud naive easterners, unused to capitalist economic practices. This was also the misfortune which befell

[25] This is a much higher order than the *Kollektiv der sozialisticschen Arbeit* award discussed in Chapter 3.

Ralf and his wife. Ralf described the perpetrators as a 'band of swindlers'. He told me they had first preyed on easterners who went west (such as the wife's friend) and then moved eastwards themselves to continue the 'deception'. Ralf's wife was able to re-enter retail as a branch manager, as she had been before the *Wende*, and Ralf sought to use his technical skills, and his newly-gained selling abilities, to regain employment. He worked firstly for a large western firm which had bought a former Halle factory. However, after some time in its direct sales department, the company decided to consolidate its estate and the Halle site began to close. At this point, Ralf, through contacts made during this period, was approached by a businessman in another town nearby and was asked to become a freelancer.

Ralf was now self-employed for a second time. However, this was also difficult and ended in acrimony in court. Ralf had been promised travel expenses and the agreement he had made before starting that he could take his already-booked holiday was denied. Ralf suggested that a similar fate awaited a colleague from the other company who had transferred at the same time. Ralf did not let this second negative experience of self-employment deter him, and he retrained as a freelance insurance broker for a western company. Getting wind of the fact the company was also legally dubious, he sought to move to a more famous and reputable multinational insurance firm. This was the start of a relatively happy period. After extensive training and professional certification, Ralf was able to open an agency for the company, with his wife as office manager. This worked relatively well for five years as Ralf was able to compete in a competitive market by offering an agency to which customers themselves could decide to go to, rather than cold-calling as was apparently common at the time. However, after five years, two fractured discs in his wife's spine meant that she could no longer work. Ralf could not cope alone with the workload this left. He was able to negotiate an end to his contract with the insurance company, and told me:

> I was lucky because I had already tried to find out at the time how it should go forward. I did not wait until it was too late. I also had contacts in Leipzig, and Leipzig is [where] the main regional office of [the insurance company] was.

The luck was short lived, however, as he was in an automobile accident, and had to spend time in hospital. Thus, the responsibilities he had gained for various regional sales were reassigned. After his return he was frustrated with the work, and the regional manageress helped him to leave the company rather than him having to resign, which would have affected potential unemployment benefits. In the eight years since that occurred, he had gone through various periods of unemployment. Despite the negative experiences thus far, he also had many periods of self-employment. These were not always successful either, but each time he returned to his freelance life.

The first of Ralf's new self-employed endeavours was when he became a – seemingly reluctant – freelance inspector for telecommunications licence evaders. Ralf did not enjoy his task of 'spying' on people, especially, for example, in garden allotment complexes to ascertain if they possessed a radio or television set. He told me that:

> It went so far that I was hit with a bone – they tried to get the dog to attack us! One colleague was held out of a window. And the final straw was that you earned €82 a month. And then I thought, this cannot go on.

Ralf then began to sell internet freelance – coincidentally for a company set up by Carmen Schön (2008) who appeared prominently in the previous chapter. This was not, however, the period in which I met him. Rather, in this earlier phase, he was tasked with cold-calling on residents of Halle-Neustadt to persuade them to take broadband internet service, when the product was not really available in many parts of it. Eventually this lack of product delivery made him decide to stop selling its product. He then sold conservatories freelance, but left once he realised the finance arrangements customers had to enter into to afford them. Afterwards, he also ended selling website-creation services through cold-calling. This task involved spending two days per week in a call-centre making appointments to meet small business managers, then meeting them on the other days. He did not enjoy the lack of freedom this set-up brought, and after receiving a tip-off from a former colleague that the company was questionable, left it also. It was after this he discovered the freelance position in which he was working when I met him.

However, he had his eyes on the future, as he predicted the commission might not last, and had already begun to seek out new possibilities.

Ralf's social(ist) dimension

It is clear that Ralf's working life, as told to me, is something which has taken many turns. There might be misfortune ('*Pech*'), and at times he described various unfortunate incidents, such as his wife's back problems, thus. However, before the *Wende* the path was relatively smooth. And Ralf's post-*Wende* story is one which *could* be told, as above, as a man who is committed to capitalism, despite the problems it has thrown at him. There is sufficient evidence for it. He has, in the terms of the books and pamphlets seen in the previous chapter, the courage and the willingness to succeed in the face of adversity that new business startups need. This is something that he has consistently shown in face of difficulties, and on multiple occasions. Ralf did not attend the seminars I attended, but he told me that they had been trained by the 'swindlers' from the west who tricked him and his wife. He gave the following example of the variety of things they had been told. It is the means whereby the owner kept on encouraging Ralf and his wife to go completely self-employed, rather than as an extra alongside their current job:

> There was this saying, the boss always said it. He took a 100 DM [€51.13] note, [deliberately] dropped it.

It fell onto the rug below. The man lifted the corner of the rug where the note had fallen and brought out from under it a 1000DM note. The 'swindler' went on to describe the 100DM as their current job, of which they were too scared to let go. Safety had to be dropped to have the chance to find more, even if it was not always obvious that money was there.

> "Whoever does not let the 100 fall and bends down to get the 1000, it is their own fault." That was the philosophy.

Ralf agreed with this, and still does. On the effort needed for self-employment, he told me:

> Self-employment is like this, because you do cannot manage to do your main job all that correctly when doing another. One of them suffers as a result. And we said, we will give full throttle for this thing, and my opinion was that it was quite OK to be in self-employment.

If there were to be a global neo-liberal project which sets out to encourage people into self-employment of which the books, advertising, pamphlets and courses seen in the previous chapter are expressions of, then in the case of Ralf it would be shown to have been very successful. This is not only that he was persuaded to do it at all, but rather that he has kept going in the face of multiple and repeated vicissitudes. He may not have earned very much money from his endeavours, but Ralf could be, if so desired, a convinced and committed mega-capitalist. This might be on a small scale in his case. However, his entrepreneurial spirit is no less strong than the personalities viewed in previous chapters. Yet, as I shall now detail, the situation is rather more complex. There might already be hints of it within what I have so far presented, in areas such as his reluctance to spy on people, and his displeasure at selling a substandard product to Internet customers, but Ralf's social, and indeed political, views are very noticeably critical of capitalism. These views were expressed from the outset of our interview. Indeed, from our initial meeting he told me of his left-wing standpoint. Perhaps even more surprising given his capitalist endeavours, Ralf is a member of Die Linke, the successor party of the SED, and of the PDS which it became after the *Wende*.

Die Linke are represented in the current nineteenth Bundestag as the fourth largest party, having 76 of 622 seats (Bundeswahlleiter 2009). It governs in coalition in Berlin, and Brandenburg, with the SPD in the east. On a national level it has gained enough votes to pass the threshold (normally 5%) to enter all but three of the *Länder* parliaments. Unlike the SED, however, the Marxist-Leninist policies were ditched after the *Wende*. It is now officially a democratic socialist party, and its draft political programme as of early 2011 calls for the controlling of excessive profits, especially in the financial sector. This is accompanied by

keeping state concerns state-owned, and encourage growth in the private sector by investing in the public sector and thus enliven the economy (Programmkommission Der Linke 2010). Whether a party's policies can be justifiably taken to completely represent those of its members is questionable. However, Ralf's own voice helps to show his own views. After highlighting that they could say exactly what they desired and in which regard, I often asked my interviewees as an initial question to describe themselves. This began before my encounter with the elevator method, however! Ralf's response, quoted here, shows that he happily places both in what traditionally would be viewed as juxtaposition:

> I would simply describe myself as a fun-loving person, who has experienced a lot, had many highs and lows but has tried to deal with the lows. What I would say is it always goes onwards, the life you have received you should use as best as you can. Also important along with that is that I am a social person, therefore also my leftist ethos, and I try very much to fight against these injustices in our times in our world.

Even though Ralf prospered in the GDR, he does not blithely regard all that the GDR represented as positive at all. In our interview he placed importance upon the democratic process, complaining that neither the GDR, nor the SED itself, were democratic. Alongside his earlier criticism of its army, and his noting that he had problems with outspokenness with the party, he also criticised the current trend for *Ostalgie*:

> There is lots of this "transfiguration", this GDR nostalgia, everything nice. But we have not forgotten that there was a Stasi.

Thus it is the repressive, restrictive parts of the state which Ralf disliked. In addition, it is the irresponsible representation of the GDR in current times which he finds displeasurable. However, Ralf does make comparisons between today's economy and society and that of the GDR which favour the former system. There are two main *foci* of this comparison, which results in a moderated criticism of capitalism, alongside this moderated criticism of the GDR. In the same way, the positive things about today, such as there being no Stasi, also meet

moderated expression of praise for certain aspects of GDR life. These, like the comments in the previous chapter, correspond to Engler's 'east German idiom'.

The first of these criticisms is based on the social – although demarcating the economic, the second, from the social is unsurprisingly difficult given the linkages which have been hereto discussed. However, Ralf talked about how pleasant it was to grow up in a society with high levels of 'social cohesion'. He talked about the new-build apartment blocks, for example in Neustadt. He had lived in a similar area, and described how

> *Herr Doktor*[26] lived beside the cleaning lady. That was a really healthy relationship. They helped each other out and financially there were broadly hardly any differences.

Despite the repressive state apparatus which was also part of the GDR,

> it was nice. You felt secure when you were sick or whatever; you were not treated like today. That is missing. You understand me? The person is no longer a social factor. A human without a social environment goes *kaputt*.

However, there was a certain restrictiveness to this GDR environment, and although it was pleasant at times to feel 'taken along' ('*mitgenommen*'), too much of this decision-making from outside was restrictive. Ralf claimed that at the *Wende* – and indeed mirroring the words of the Dutch seminar leader in the previous chapter – 'what we eastern Germans lacked was this self-awareness' which is needed to organise your own business, or even own life, in capitalist societies. Even though they suffered from the experience with the insurance fraudsters they 'learned it relatively early'. Whereas others 'need someone there who says do this, do that, they do not want to decide for themselves' they had learned to 'take your life in your own hands, decide yourself what you want to do'. However, the other side of this is that 'no-one will come to help you any more'.

[26] This can mean both medical or academic.

There is already a certain ambiguity here, which matches the seemingly apparent juxtaposition of self-employment with Linke membership. In this same vein, certain aspects of the economy in current times are good in his view, others most certainly not. This was not specifically linked to the financial crisis then unfolding, but rather to the great inequality which he claimed had to be resolved. At the time there had been significant mention in the press of a – extremely metaphorically powerful – 'locust capitalism', which in a basic sense refers to asset stripping, but seemed to symbolise for Ralf the system itself. Our interview had taken place early in my research, around the point where the stock markets had tumbled and banks had had to be rescued. After mentioning that from my initial readings of the books for potential business-startups exemplary figures were ubiquitous – an observation which I developed in the previous chapter – I asked him if he could think of any such role models. He said there had been some before, and that he had had a favourable impression of certain people to some extent. However, it was the locust capitalists which he found unacceptable, those whose interest is 'only maximum profit and stopping at nothing. And when someone is not needed, then getting rid of them'.

Ralf, despite not naming an exemplary figure of the positive variety had no problem identifying individuals at the opposite end of the scale: bankers. He named the head of a particularly large German (multinational) bank, who had publicly waived his €1.4M bonus, but still drew a salary of €12M. He commented that

> These managers etc, well, it is deviant, it cannot be so. If I had my way I would have a wealth tax, a millionaire tax, etc. I would get them to pay, or tell *them* to clear off.

He did not see capitalism itself as problematic *per se*, but it was this type which was 'really bad' and was so unfair that he said 'I hope, or have the feeling, that some day it will devour itself'. What was interesting in Ralf's critique of this variety of capitalism was that there was a strong overtone of Marxian terminology within it. There is already a hint of this in the preceding

quotation, which has the echoes of Marxist 'stages of history' and dialectics. The following shows both his views clearly, and the result of a GDR education as witnessed in Chapter 3:

> I want to fight against the private ownership of the means of production. That annoys me. I have nothing against private property, but the private ownership of the means of production, I'll just say, in the GDR we had the theory and now we have the praxis.

He went on, in sad and almost disappointed tones:

> Marx and Engels had really quite a lot right about the theory (said in a sad way) but this private ownership of the means of production is the key to the exploitation of humans by humans. The rich get richer, because they have the machines, the factories, the whole knowhow, and the others are dependent.

This is interesting in three senses. Firstly, it is important to note that Ralf is dissatisfied with the current system. Secondly, the almost by-rote repetition of text-book Marxist theory shows how strongly this GDR education, at least in a rhetorical sense, affected its citizens. The passage of time only highlights its persistence. Thirdly, and perhaps most interestingly, is that the most recently-cited gobbet of speech above, where two concepts, or rather, two forms of one concept, are placed in juxtaposition. has a certain heritage. Ralf has placed Marxist terms such as 'exploitation' ('*Ausbeutung*'), 'ownership of the means of production', in opposition to 'private property'. This distinction is made in exactly the same way in the GDR *Kleines Politisches Wörterbuch*, with two numbered parts of the entry on 'property' ('*Eigentum*'). (G. Schütz et al. 1978:187-88). In the first, mirroring Ralf's criticism of the ownership of the means of production, and acceptance of private property, it characterises private property as something capitalist, and which will be overcome by socialism. The dictionary states, in the second definition, that it is the constitutionally-guaranteed reward for work. In a broad sense, a combination of these two definitions is almost the emblem of Ralf's own working career, except that it has had to be modified conceptually after the *Wende*: whereas it was the state which once provided him with the work to have this reward, now it is his own personally-directed independence. And in any case, he is firmly embedded in, and committed to a democratic Germany, based on a social

market economy. When I asked him about the apparent contradiction between his economic actions and his political views, he commented with a hearty laugh:

> there have been people who would like to rebuild the Wall. Though that is nonsense. We would rather make the whole of Germany socialist, that is more sensible!

In terms of business success, Ralf's highlighting of his eastern German credentials seems to have done no harm. I had asked Ralf if being from the east had helped him in some way. He told me that this was the case, and indeed he 'noticed it right from the beginning'. He went on to give an example. Ralf said that, compared to the many western agents who had moved to Halle to sell insurance, he was reticent in his appearance. He told me that

> I said then that I would not go to people with a collar and tie, because I might as well just go straight away again. And I also did drive there in a Mercedes – but also not in a *Trabi*!

There was a certain professionalism involved, and not overegging of an eastern pudding baked on a Trabi's bonnet by going to an appointment in such an iconic eastern conveyance (cf. Berdahl 2000a). Rather, it was the reticence of dressing less formally, of not driving an expensive car which was important. However, it was what could aptly be called the consociality itself which was equally vital. He told me:

> the people always still want this feeling of us ('*Wir-Gefühl*'), like we experienced earlier, this social equality. And it gave me much strength that I was there, and [the customers said] 'finally, someone who is not a *Wessi*!'

Thus, although it may have been the case that growing up in the east, or the GDR, might have – as he himself claimed – brought negative characteristics such as timorousness and a lack of self-awareness, there were clearly benefits in Ralf's opinion:

> 'I am convinced that when you come from here you have the better cards'.

This seems to have applied to the customers, because he claimed that his aim was that his customers were satisfied, that either they could say that it worked, or if not, people would think

> that you tried your best and have not pulled a fast one on [them].

The tangle of social and economic rhetoric in situations

Before moving on to compare what Ralf has said with others, it is first necessary to consider what he did actually say, yet this time in a broader thematic way. The first theme which is noticeable in Ralf's speech is that of the neoliberal-imbued rhetoric of the pressure to be successful and be businessperson-like in order so to do. There have been seen to be many sources of this rhetorical force acting upon the self-employed. Further it might be argued that it is not surprising he uses it, given the fact he is a self-employed businessperson. It is more surprising in light of something else he says, which itself is surprising: the fact his discourse was simultaneously imbued with political and ideological concepts, and indeed phrases, which criticised the system of capitalism itself. This is the second broad theme, Marxism. The situation is not so clear, however, and contemporary events complicate it if it is going to be extracted as a theme to compare with what others told me. The 2007– financial crisis and the various events, amid ongoing turmoil within the global capitalist system it brought, saw increasing number of mainstream newspaper and magazine articles in Germany, Austria and the UK at least which started to question whether capitalism was at an end, or facing deep reform. As Marx is, in the public mind, the most famous critic of capitalism – indeed, in terms of the 'Cold War binaries' its antithesis – similar newspaper articles began to ponder whether Marx had indeed been correct all along. This was in the period after which I had begun my fieldwork. Gudeman has pointed to the persuasiveness of, for example, Marx's narrative of property ownership and alienation (2009a:68-69), and I gave further examples in Chapter 1. As Marx was someone who was attempting to persuade others that the system was wrong, it is not surprising that his theory lends itself to being persuasive. And this importance in the power of narrative inherent in Marxist dialectics becomes particularly clear after teaching a lecture on Marxism to undergraduates! This is the part which makes the concept clear – or as clear as it could be – because it is predicated on stages following other stages in an apparently clear, causal order. This effect might be said to be particularly strong in times of financial crisis, when

the end point of Marx's narrative seems to approach, or rather, some of the events he described bear similarities to those currently happening. It is a narrative which seems particularly coherent, and thus even more persuasive given the *kairos*.

Despite this coherence, a large portion of this and Ralf's explanations of how events have occurred is actually based upon the third theme, which I suggest is the 'consocial'. While Ralf's criticisms of the capitalist system in which he operates appears to be political, it is not so simple. It resembles Engler's concept of eastern German idiom to a point, and thus is based on the sense that easterners complain that sociality and solidarity experienced in the GDR is lost. It is this, rather than a regime or a political system *per se*, which is being mourned when used by Engler, and eastern Germans on the broadest scale. In a sense, it is this complexity which is being expressed here by Ralf. His explanations of events encapsulate the difficulty in demarcating intertwining concepts. The GDR was politically Marxist, and solidarity was part of the political message the state preached. This solidarity bifurcates into social solidarity, and economic equality. However, one is based on the other. The fact that these are things which are generally regarded as morally good things renders any task of extricating them even more complicated. It is clear that politicians today would have a difficult task in arguing for more *inequality*. It does not take a GDR to make this the case. When a state socialist regime such as the GDR is geopolitically gone, it is still the case that social and economic equality is regarded as a positive concept. However, the fact that the GDR itself claimed to represent these values means it is such a complex and almost Gordian-knotted problem in extricating them.

In this sense, *Ostalgie* represents an emotional loss brought about by the feeling that GDR social relations have been lost; criticism of *Ostalgie* can be seen as missing the point that the GDR was not just its repressive regime. This is highlighted in Ralf's example of the customers pleased to see he was not a *Wessi*, which firstly recalls that a large part of rhetoric is a matter of practice as well as speech. What this also shows, however, is that the customers – when they saw he was eastern rather than western – expected, from experience, someone who cared for their

needs, who could anticipate *their* requirements rather than merely their own. While he may have been a contemporary, he was assumed to have very developed consociational abilities. It was not only that he was a nice person who could be friendly and 'social'. Rather, Ralf was someone who thought about what his customers might themselves think. Ralf would not 'want a fast one pulled' on him. He would thus understand they also would not, and despite the fact it would financially benefit him at their expense, would not 'pull a fast one'. I suggest this is itself further evidence for a 'consociational personality' ideal among eastern Germans. Below, I will provide further evidence of the rhetoric – verbal and practice-based – for such. But the question of the Marxist speech still remains.

I suggested above that interviews such as this one represent a place where a relative space of relaxation is created, and Linde indeed suggest that life story telling is a 'cooperative achievement' between conversation partners (1993:12). On the one hand, the telling of the narrative can be self-directed. It therefore contributes to the construction of the self-image of that person. However, it is also in the telling to others that this occurs. This is recursive, in that the impression gained by the other person should also be positive, to reinforce that sense of good self-image in the original person. The *kairos* of the situation still means there is a need to present oneself well for one's *own* benefit. However, that depends on the person being told. The *kairos* of an interview between Ralf and me is much different to that between a hypothetical interview with a bank official. The coincidental fact that *Hypothek* is German for 'mortgage' recalls that there may be a very existential need to impress a bank manager that someone is 'businesslike' and worthy of initial or continuing investment. This raises an important question regarding Ralf's political views in juxtaposition to his personal economic outlook. Given that the formality of the training course environment represents a space where Marxism might not traditionally be regarded as an appropriate cultural item to mention, does the fact such things were not mentioned there but were in this interview, show views which are widely held but suppressed in the presence of the global assemblage of neoliberal business? Or might it simply be that Ralf holds views which a quantitative analyst might describe as those of an 'outlier'? In

any case, what this does highlight is the broad, diverse and contradictory set of rhetorical forces acting upon the self-employed person does not only apply in recounting their 'life story'. It also applies to gaining and keeping customers. In a creative act of narrative and ideological *bricolage* Ralf uses all three themes – neoliberal change, Marxism, and the social – and does so creatively. What, however, do others do? It is time to describe the 'life stories' of some other self-employed people I met and with whom I conducted relatively open and relaxed interviews.

Rhetorical source number one: neoliberal change

I had met **Ingeborg**, a lawyer, at the event where the Dutchman had suggested eastern Germans needed to sell themselves better. Ingeborg was a very interesting person to talk to, and she was likewise interested in hearing about my work and which differences I had noticed between Germany, Austria and the UK. It would be possible to write about her in as much detail as Ralf, as it would be for anyone else presented in this thesis. However, space precludes such an opportunity. In any case, however, she is the lawyer whom I mentioned in the previous chapter, and who had practised her elevator method. Ingeborg had grown up in the GDR, but now 35, had finished her education in Halle during the first years of the new unified FRG. She had described the ending of the GDR and its safe predictability, her parents' unemployment, the sense of having to decide oneself what to do, metaphorically. She said it had felt like life in the GDR had been 'lived under a *Käseglocke*': this latter term referring to a clear, thick glass dome which sits atop a cheese board to ensure freshness, by isolating it from agents which will cause it to rot. Suddenly it had been lifted and insecurity had arrived and 'from the silly and poor GDR child became a pan-German'. Ingeborg had faced much change in her life. She had not planned to be a lawyer, and had wanted to be a vet when growing up, for example, and she had told me to 'never say never' about life's course.

Indeed, between graduating from university, and opening her own practice, she had surprisingly (to her) been an advisor to a pharmaceutical company. Indeed, when unemployed at

graduation itself she had gone to the *Arbeitsamt* and ended up working there for some years. It was not necessarily the case that she was unquestionably required as a lawyer to open her own practice. Yet, she did. What was most important for her in her newly self-employed current life, however, was the ability to decide her own daily plans, compared to these earlier employments. She could now decide what to do and when she wanted to do it, and said 'for me, it is total liberation'. She worked hard, but as she liked to get up later and also work later, she now could do so. She could make her own decisions. Even the insecurity of income was interesting for her. She worried about it, but she said that the need to gain customers 'makes sure I do not become lazy'.

Someone whom it would be difficult to describe as lazy is **Karl**. I met him at one of the courses mentioned in this and the previous chapter, and he also focused on the liberty and freedom aspect of self-employment. However, as usual, the picture is much more complex. Karl is a furniture restorer who had decided to become self-employed. At the end of our interview, before we left his workshop, he went to the toilet. He returned somewhat inspired. He had decided that he liked the sound of ethnographic methods, of asking people themselves how they felt. He told me that I should come and see his living quarters to show what kind of adjustments he had had to make to survive financially in recent times. Karl had explained during the interview that he had not enjoyed working in others' employ because he was too interested in the quality of his work. He did not want to simply follow others' instructions, but had pride in his work and liked to work in a certain, thoughtful way to provide the quality he wanted. He told me:

> I am not a massive individualist, but I have certain ideas about plans of work. In restoration, and in creating new things too, you create a plan of work, and work at it. There are people who can simply produce work. And they say "at 16.00 I will drill" or "at 17.00 I'll put my tools away and go home". The work I do has to have meaning.

Fig. 5.1

Karl's rural residence, filled with neoliberal items

In order to have the freedom to work how he wanted, he had taken up self-employment. He had to work more than before, with much more insecurity, but he felt that he had to offer the service he enjoyed offering, and this was the only way forward. However, finances were tight.

In order to reduce costs, Karl had moved out of an old factory into an old construction workers' hut, which he had gained permission to place in the garden of an alternative/leftist commune – in a hamlet in the countryside near Halle. By so doing, he could cut his rental and power costs to a minimum. Using his furniture restoration skills, he had begun to refurbish it, and had tried to install as many pieces of equipment as possible. I did indeed go and visit him, and stayed overnight to experience life there and met some of his friends and neighbours.[27] We met in Halle, and he drove me there in his vintage Renault van. The roads outside the hamlet are partly metalled, however others bear the cobbles still in place from the GDR period. The commune is on a small cul-de-sac off the main road, and it is a very quiet place. From the quiet appearance of the hamlet, with its few older residents whom I saw walk around, wearing the *Kittel* smock popular in the GDR (cf. Berdahl 1999:203-04), I would not have imagined it was there. What was more striking, however, was the inside of Karl's office/living room within the hut. Both the room, and the hut itself, are presented in Fig. 5.1. Inside this small hamlet, inside an alternative commune, inside a somewhat ramshackle hut, which give the impression of quietness, in the middle of a room can be found what is basically the material culture of the bureaucratic, centralised state. This took the form of all manner of files and forms, health insurance, taxation and professional organisation, and on entering the room for the first time the juxtaposition of this to these artistic and alternative surroundings was striking. Karl had had to learn how to complete this documentation, but in the same way as he had had to adapt his living arrangements, he would try to master all these tasks too. He really did not have much choice.

[27] Even an anthropologist working in and near a town can face dangers: I received a tick bite on the abdomen during this visit!

Angela is the manager of an organic foodshop, and has been for fifteen years. She had also been the manager of a health-and-beauty shop during the GDR period, but as the state concern had been privatised after reunification, she had been made unemployed. She said she was lucky as she 'did not fall into a hole' because she decided to use the opportunity to look after her son. However, she did keep up to date with business matters, and read that for such shops to survive, they had to specialise into either beauty, health products or photography. This made her wonder if perhaps she could not start doing this again, of perhaps having her own shop. She did not want to do photography, and beauty was not too interesting for her. However, she was interested in health, had become interested in the newly-growing organic movement so went to the bank, and managed to get a loan. However, she had noticed that the health products sold much better than the health-and-beauty offerings, and so her business developed. Her husband had been very supportive, but he had always been worried by the lack of security. However, Angela was glad that he had been so helpful, and noted that you cannot live in 100% security. You had to work hard, even if it meant being a 'single warrior' ('*Einzelkämpfer*'). She told me that she ended up often working twelve-hour days. It seemed, by surviving for fifteen years, in an increasingly competitive market, and in a street which had lost its importance as a pedestrian street due to a new bus station being built, she seemed to enjoy it as well as being successful.

The second rhetorical source: the consocial

I have tried so far to present the neo-liberal, change, tenacious-side of the business lives of the persons so far presented, as presented to me, separated from the consociational. There is no adequate analytical *Käseglocke* to keep both apart. For as even Karl's hut inside the alternative commune could not keep out the tax regime, these neoliberal stories cannot keep out the social – far from it. Angela, even though she was a successful businesswoman, exudes an aura of friendliness and helpfulness. During our interview, which took place in her shop while she was off-duty, she greeted customers who greeted her. There seemed to be long term relationships,

and at one point she exclaimed, 'Frau Müller, watch out! The parking attendants are coming again!'. I asked her at one point what she had noticed was different between being a branch manager in the GDR, and running her own shop. She said that the shops then were not so large, were not massive chains. However, the principle had not changed. It was still important to build and maintain a 'heartfelt relationship' with your customers. Compared to other business practices she said, 'I did not have to relearn that, I had it from my apprenticeship onwards'. She criticised the impersonal quality, and harsh lighting, of a newly-opened competitor. Rather, she was of the opinion that people still liked the '*Tante-Emma-Laden*' – the 'Aunt Emma shops', where you could (consocially) go in, people would know you and you would know them, they would already have your groceries packed up and waiting for you. I am not sure if this personification rhetoric was supposed to refer to her herself and the pleasure she receives from it. However, she went on to say that

> what I want is to be able to have contact with my customers. I want to be friendly and natural. This place must facilitate that so the right atmosphere is there. [...] It has to radiate warmth.

It seems to be an atmosphere which people have liked enough to appreciate over fifteen years, which suggests it is effective.

In terms of reticence, of not showing off, despite her agreement that eastern Germans needed to present themselves more clearly, and her agreement with the usefulness of the elevator method, Ingeborg stressed very much that being reticent works in eastern Germany, among eastern Germans. After discussing the course, I had said that I had begun to wonder if it was possible to notice differences between eastern and western Germans, or whether the stereotypes pre-figured expectations. She replied that there were indeed clear differences, and gave the example of how people greet each other. Whereas Ralf talked of the taking by the hand, here it was the taking *of* the hand, in a physical sense. She said that easterners will shake hands much more often than westerners, and that easterners are much more straightforward. A deal could be made with a handshake, and it would be taken as so. I mentioned in the

previous chapter she claimed westerners were much more boastful. However, she suggested that the ease with which people spoke personally – such as we were doing right then – was eastern itself. However, the most interesting piece of rhetoric in the interview, besides the *Käseglocke*, was the narrative of the retired member of a large company's board. I think she may have read it in a book, but as a piece of explication of how eastern Germans represent themselves in business it is very rich. Ingeborg told me that the manager, when he retuned to visit his old firm during the annual staff party,

> it was only the easterners who acknowledged him. After he had retired. Because, well I think, that when we build up a relationship to someone, then it is also real and not only for business.

Karl, for his part, also mentioned similar themes. And there are no lack of similar examples from other people. **Frau Grünwald**, a hairdresser who has managed to remain open for nine years in a city with a noticeable abundance of hairdressers which regularly open up and close down again, could describe her '*Firmenphilosophie*' as consisting of two factors. There was firstly a practical competence which was vital. Secondly there was the importance that 'the person is understood to be a person'.

The third rhetorical source: Marxism

Criticism of the FRG's system – in a rather more direct form – came from **Benni**. He had been a non-conformist rock musician in the GDR and had now retaken up his playing – after having opened a very successful customised embroidery business. He, despite his outwardly 'rockstar' looks, was extremely pro-business and indeed told me that all the best rockstars (such as Mick Jagger) were also extremely good businessmen. He had enjoyed his own post-*Wende* commercial life and could now return to his real love – music – after passing on the business to his son. However, Benni was vocal in his criticism of the current social system, while also being glad of the wider material prosperity and personal freedom. He told me:

> We are glad that what has come, but the social is fucked up. [In the GDR] it was, we must shamefully say, one hundred times better.

He could criticise the debt people had gotten themselves into, while noting the material benefits:

> If you look at all the houses today but in western style, well they're all on the tick. [The GDR] was a dictatorship, but for the normal citizen who needed to get by, it was better. That I must say in defence, *they* [the FRG] needed to catch up [with us].

This last particular phrase references the famous cultural item of the perceived '*Nachholbedarf*', the need for the eastern areas to catch up materially with western standards after reunification. Benni, despite his criticism of the FRG's system of social provision among other things, did not mention the Marxist-imbued rhetorical political terms as employed by Ralf. Indeed, it was above noted that he had been not a particular fan of the GDR's political system. He also told me that he was the black sheep of the family, inside a household of committed civil officials. It is thus unlikely he would have used such political terms given his dislike of the regime. As it turned out, Ralf actually was the sole person who did.

I am not sure if Ralf did mention politics to his other customers, but it was not the thing which persuaded me to get my internet through him, with him getting the €10 commission rather than me getting it in reward card points by signing up myself online. Rather, a great deal of it was through his friendliness, and of course, I did want to interview him! As Ralf was actually the first person I interviewed, and although not the first person I had spoken to, it was the first long-term recorded conversation. On one hand, I wondered at the time if there would be many people so politically open. However, not everyone is a member of a left-wing political party. Further, while many eastern Germans – and among them the self-employed – were socialised in the GDR, and thus possibly could reach back into this particular political rhetorical store, as suggested above, it turned out they did not do so. I may have learned inadvertently that someone voted for a certain party, but otherwise, this was not particularly referred to. Despite Ralf's appearance as what would be indeed called an 'outlier' in quantitative analyses, Ralf is

interesting because he not only shows how creative people can be in their economic rhetoric. Borneman, in his study of pre-*Wende* Berlin, showed that after WWII people who were opposed somewhat politically to the state could accept it because socialism could be likened 'to a working-together, a unity of purpose in a relatively egalitarian group' with 'a strong sense of belonging to an empirical community' (1992:120). Explanatory *bricolage* can have very creative results.

Conclusion

In the stories of the various self-employed persons I have described here, there is some change which has occurred. They began their lives in the GDR, and today are business persons. Some are more advanced in their careers than others, some are more materially successful than others. All, however, are persistent and hardworking. All are courageous. But all in some way also stressed the importance of caring about others, of honesty, clarity, and equality in various forms. As I suggested in the previous chapter, while it is clear that some form of socialist personality may have existed, at least as ideal, even if it did, it does not today among these self-employed people. They do activities for their own financial gain. However, among these eastern Germans engaging in neoliberal practices at various levels – and capitalism in a capitalist system at the very least – there is still an ideal sense of personhood that does not avoid consociational characteristics as important. In the previous chapter I suggested this might be called consociational personhood, and this chapter has allowed me to provide more evidence of it. If a change has had to occur, it is not from black to white in any case. Neither is it really a continuum which goes from black to white through some smooth gradient.

Ralf, the most extreme example of how the two combine, shows that at various times he can highlight both. At the Internet sales desk he would need to show that he was more towards one end of some spectrum. He had to be (mostly!) businessman-like and show not only knowledge but act competently. However, at party meetings he would be required to be

towards the other, by dint of the party's policies and wanting to progress in it. Karl could sit in his hut in the garden of the commune and fill in his tax returns. Angela could be Aunt Emma, but she could also be thinking of expansion, of opening a larger shop elsewhere in Halle, which were her future plans. And being Aunt Emma did not stop her using the opportunity of five years previous to open a beauty products shop across the street when someone else did not avail of the space. Frau Grünwald still wanted to make people feel like people. And Benni, a GDR-critical non-conformist could make money while criticising the FRG's poor provision for caring for others. In this sense, I still appreciate the concept of the global assemblage to describe the mixture which is eastern German entrepreneurship and self-employment. However, in terms of actual content the people I have presented here described themselves as equally or even more consociational than business-like. It is not only how they construct themselves as businesspersons, but given the importance of business in their 'life stories', it is clear this refers to their personhood in general as well. Further, this is regarded as something which eastern Germans are particularly good examples of, and when I could witness them in their business lives it appeared they attempted to practise this too. While it might be the case that they genuinely do it for their own wellbeing, it is also a rhetorical activity. It is not only narratively rhetorical in the telling, but it has to be verbally and physically enacted in gaining and maintaining customers through interactions. In the chapters in the following Part I will show further how this is the case, as well as provide further evidence that a consociational personhood is good for business as well. For the persons I introduce, it is very important that it is. While I have already highlighted that the existences of some of eastern German self-employed persons is quite precarious, the product promoters I now introduce live in particularly precarious circumstances. As 'persuasion factories', as I will come to describe them, their ability to use their consociational skills is particularly existentially important in such circumstances.

PART

3

Persuasion factories

Product promoters at the extreme end of 'new self-employment'

6 Promoting products and the person

Rhetoric, sociality and survival among eastern German freelance product promoters

Introduction

In Part 2, on moving through Chapters 4 and 5, my investigation of the rhetoric of personhood as presented as an ideal by various persons in different situations moved from a broader to a smaller scale of focus. In Chapter 4, the presentation of the ideal entrepreneur in the media moved from a general German level, to an eastern version in *SUPERIllu*, to public yet face-to-face interactions in training courses, to interview-based conversations predominately in Chapter 5. In Part 3, therefore in this chapter and the next, I move on to a particular case study of self-employment which is particularly interesting for this study. As will be seen below, it is a field of self-employment which is not only part of a growing trend for people to become self-employed while they do jobs which could equally be performed in a paid, employed position. This field, however, also represents a version of self-employment where those engaging in it appear to be employed, while in fact benefiting from none of the advantages and legal and social security provisions which such a situation would bring. Further, it is a field where persons engaged in it are required to be particularly skilful in altering their self-presentation, often from day to day, if they are to be successful. In this connection, they must appear to show great loyalty and consociational intimacy with those who benefit from this situation while they themselves are potentially put at a financial and social disadvantage. In addition, these persons need, likewise to be successful, to show great consociational skills towards their customers, I argue, in order to survive within their field. Despite these circumstances, I present people who do manage to

do so with ongoing success – indeed, very much so. This is the world of the freelance product promoter. However, to begin my investigation of this area of 'new self-employment', for a moment, I hand over to the product promoters themselves. It is '*Feierabend*', quitting time, at the end of a busy working day in a wholesale cash-and-carry in eastern Germany. It is the end of my second, and final, day there as an ethnographer. Two persons who were my colleagues on that occasion were wishing each other a pleasant evening. It is a scene familiar, on first glance, to those played out daily in offices, factories and retail environments around the world as the working day comes to its conclusion. However, there was a significant difference here compared to the conversations held in those places. It is revealed by listening in to the conversation...

PERSON 1: Until the next time… wherever, whenever that is!
(*firmly shakes hand*)
PERSON 2: Yeah, we'll see each other sometime... the world is a village, and the world of promotion just more so!

Just like me, the ethnographer, they would likewise not be there the next day, but for different reasons. There was no guarantee, indeed, they would ever work together again. They were not being made redundant, for, in a sense, they were not working together at all. However much the outward appearance resembles the convivial, collegial salutation which is found in any workplace where cordial relations exist between staff, they were not employed by the wholesale company at all. These persons were product promoters, but indeed, their actual employment status is equally ambiguous, and part of a widening move towards flexible working practices in this area. In Chapter 4, I noted how, as Martin suggests, a growing momentum in which people had been required to become 'mini-corporations' through the spread and assimilation of neo-liberal economic principles has come about. In this process, these persons become 'oriented primarily to its own interests in global flows of capital' rather than 'citizens, oriented to the interests of the nation' (2007:42), which involves viewing themselves as 'collections of assets that must be continually invested in, nurtured, managed, and

Fig. 6.1

The large amount of anonymisation in this photograph of a product promoter in an eastern German supermarket highlights the importance of advertising and brand names in such an environment. The fact he is not employed by the company whose logo he is surrounded by highlights the nature of product promotion as a type of 'new self-employment'.

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developed' (2000:582). The world of product promotion represents a domain into which such thinking has expanded.

It might seem unlikely to a supermarket or department store customer that the person they encounter offering them samples of products in order to persuade them to purchase is engaged very directly in such neoliberal employment practices. Indeed, given the obvious visual linkages between that person and the product, it is very possible, or even likely, that it would never cross their mind that the promoters are self-employed. I had not realised it myself until discussing eastern German products with such a promoter at the sales event I described in Hamilton (2010c:47-49). However, by cementing my contact with him I was able to spend time among self-employed product promoters in various circumstances principally in Halle, and also further

afield. Based on these experiences, in this chapter I demonstrate how the position of such persons is precarious in terms of livelihood and isolation, despite their consumer-facing appearance of 'employment'. I show how their interactions with customers, imbued with rhetoric, in this extremely rhetorical environment, function as means of proving their consociational skills, and thus gain further work. In Chapter 7 which follows, I show how, using the very few resources they gain as part of their work, they create sociality, not only because it is enjoyable so to do, but also in order to maintain their existence in increasingly hostile employment circumstances. In this, I argue, these combine to maintain the traditions of eastern German working practices in factories, and to emulate the commodity-based social networks from the GDR era. Thus, it will be seen to represent another of the 'global assemblages' (Collier and Ong 2005) which eastern German entrepreneurship and self-employment in its broader sense represents.

The role of the product promoter

'*Promotion*', the English loanword used in German to describe the act of entering a retail outlet and meeting customers in order to persuade them to purchase, has some notable German-language homographs. It refers not only to the dubbing of knights, but also to the gaining of a doctorate, so in a sense this chapter links both processes in a symbolic way. However, there are intrinsic similarities, in the area of transformation of personhood, in that in entering both the investiture ceremonies, and the supermarket, one's symbolic status is changed in the public view. The man who can be viewed in Fig. 6.1 is a mini-corporation, but the impression we receive of him may well be symbolically altered. This is not merely a metaphorical description. Technically, to be precise, he is not literally a corporation in the sense that his business, when it was founded, could not have become a limited company (*Gesellschaft mit begrenzter Haftung*, or *GmbH*) as might be the case in the United Kingdom. This was due to German company law, which required a minimum starting capital of €25,000. Even though this was made easier in 2008 through federal legislation which allowed a new form of limited company to be founded

with a mere €1[28] there is no fictional legal personality of the limited company connected to the man in Fig. 6.1. Rather, he has his '*Gewerbeschein*', a business licence and, as required by law, is member of the local chamber of commerce. Rather as in the case of a 'sole trader' in the UK, the person standing there is fully *personally* liable for his business activities.

Despite this situation of being self-employed, on happening across a scene similar to that in Fig. 6.1, the casual – and by no means unreasonable – assumption by a consumer might be that the man, standing at the plastic stand bedecked in the company logo and colours might be employed by it. When he tells you how wonderful the biscuits are, and is now letting you taste them, and maybe even giving you a money-off voucher, the thought might well be that he is

Fig. 6.2

The author promoting wines in a wholesale cash-and-carry.

[28] This was provided for in Article 1, §6 of the MoMiG law (Deutscher Bundestag 2008), which altered the Gmbh-G law on limited companies (*GmbHs*) (Deutscher Reichstag 1892).

indeed part of that company. Likewise, the lady offering little cups of coffee, knows about the beans and the roasting process, and hands you a little gift such as a measuring spoon, would likewise appear to belong to the coffee company. Or the nice, young man in the wine company apron, who invites you to taste, can give you a history of the vineyard, information on the wine, the grape, must surely be intimately linked therewith. And, as the syrupy vapid 'Tannoy' announcement jingle notes, it is '*die wunderschöne Spargelzeit*' ('the wonderfully lovely asparagus season'), so the gift of a branded asparagus peeler, or perhaps two, with a little conspiratorial smile and wink, adds to the overall impression of a sympathetic person with the authority that a long term relationship with the firm must bring. However, as I learned during my two days acting as a product promoter in a cash-and-carry as noted above, this was not always the case. The impression was further strengthened by attendance at other events by accompanying promoters, and sustained visiting of two promoters during their various activities when working alone in supermarkets and department stores – including one in a supermarket in the western German *Bundesland* of Lower Saxony, 354 km by road from my home in Halle. It thus became clear, and as can be seen from Figs. 6.1-2 and from the other descriptions above, in the case of product promoters, the self-employed person takes on the mantle of both an employed person, and the product itself. It is interesting to consider in more detail on which legal and contractual basis this occurs.

'How to' be a promoter: the document-based version

In Chapter 4 I examined the books and magazines which provide instructions to new or potential self-employed people on how they should behave in light of gaining, or in order to gain, this new role. Now, in helping to situate the role of the product promoter further, it is worthwhile to examine the documents provided to those who take on the task. While I am not in possession of a contract, on one of the occasions I 'observed' a product promoter at work for a whole day I was provided with a document that the promoter had himself been given by the company for whom the promotion was to take place. Rather shorter than the book-length

tomes examined earlier, this half-page document in a rather small font size did manage to contain two sections: firstly the '*Richtlinie für Werbekraft*' ('guidelines/instructions for promotional staff'), followed by *'Ihr Aufgabenbereich*' ('your responsibilities/duties'). Notably, it is stated clearly from the start of the guidelines that you are freelance. It is further stated that 'between you and us no rights and duties based on the relationship employer:employee are created' and the benefits of this for you follow after a semicolon: 'in particular you are in any case free to decide whether you wish to accept the contract or not'. While, if a 'freedom-loving' person such as lawyer Ingeborg in the previous chapter, this might sound like a good thing, the first of the more ominous aspects soon follows: 'It also remains in our discretion whether to offer you any further contracts. There is no entitlement for a fixed number of contracts for either contracting partners'. It is also the responsibility for the promoter to arrange their own tax, social security and health insurance payments. Further, the company takes no responsibility for your actions during your promoting of their products, and you must arrange your own liability insurance. The overall tone is of being on your own.

Even if the relationship between company and promoter is legally of the relationship between contracting parties rather than employer and employee, the tasks that the document sets out in the second section seem very much those of an employee. In the list which forms this section, the tasks, are, it seemed to me, almost identical in a practical sense to when I worked for a supermarket:

- Trustworthiness, punctuality and good appearance
- Conformance to the customs and practices of the company in which you provide sales advice
- Knowledge and active offering of wares
- Proactive establishment of contact for replenishing of stock if required
- Keeping to the agreed break times
- Total and correct completion of forms

Further, I got the same feeling when aiding with promotion, and especially so when required to do it myself. In such circumstances, where there is such overlapping in terms of employment status and tasks required, it 'pays' to consider the benefits and disadvantages for both of these

contracting parties – as presented by this guideline document – compared to what would be the case if they were in the relationship it is made explicitly clear does not exist. And indeed, 'pay' is one of things which the promoter does still get for carrying out the task, and in this, will be provided with the necessary materials with which to do so. However, the question remains, for how long does this actually all last?

It is made clear that the promoter may be free to choose to work for them or not. Indeed, freedom was one of the themes mentioned by Ralf, Ingeborg and Karl in the previous chapter as to why self-employment is attractive to them. However, the freedom which they described was one of working times and of personal independence in choosing how they managed their businesses. The freedom here is of choosing something completely different to do, or working on behalf of a different company, which implies a certain luxuriousness of opportunities which is not so widespread in a region with such high unemployment as Saxony-Anhalt as noted above. Rather, given the overall tone of the document, it could easily be hypothesised that this 'freedom' is more beneficial for the producing company. There are no ongoing employment costs in terms of social security premiums, and they are not liable for your mistakes. All the while, their advertising tasks are carried out by the promoter, under the confidentiality 'clause', which protects them just as much as if the promoter were directly employed. And if the tasks required are not performed to their satisfaction, or they decide there is no need for advertising, then no redundancy costs are payable. The only risk for them might be the risk of undependable new staff. However, the balance of risk-taking seems skewed onto the promoter, and the movement in this direction is not only visible in the 'world of promotion', as the promoter above was noted to call it.

Corporations outsourcing risk to mini-corporations

The guidelines document provided to promoters as seen above represents a growing phenomenon in terms of employment practices, and not only in Germany. Although only 2.4%

of persons employed in the service sector in Germany in the first half of 2005 were '*freie Mitarbeiter*', the freelancer status mentioned in the document above, it is highest in that particular sector (Hohendammer and Bellman 2007:36). Further, it is part of the growing numbers in 'atypical employment', which overall reached 54.9% in that period in the sector, and 44.6% overall. Alongside the *freie Mitarbeiter*, there are those on limited-term contracts, part-time workers, those with extremely short working hours, temps and agency staff, as well as trainees (ibid.) This broader group of '*freie Berufler'* themselves form part of the phenomenon of the 'new self-employed' who 'do not correspond to the traditional profile of the entrepreneur', 'work on their own account and without employees' and 'rely on selling their labour just as the dependent employed do' (Buschoff and Schmidt 2009:147). Though they 'stress that [such] contracts may also reflect the needs of workers', Muehlberger and Bertolini also note that 'firms are motivated to utilize dependent self-employed workers in an effort to reduce costs by transforming fixed costs into variable costs (financial flexibility), to increase numerical flexibility, and to externalize part of the entrepreneurial risk' (2008:452). Further, it allows firms to adapt their costs to their demand, and in this sense represents a means of 'external flexibilisation', alongside agency workers, which complements 'internal flexibilisation' measures such as flexitime, part-time working and performance related pay, among other things (Keller and Seifert 2007:16).

This has the effect, pointed to above and witnessed in the document handed to product promoters, that the 'new self-employed' operate 'not subject to labour law but to civil and commercial law and thus do not enjoy the protection afforded by labour rights' (Buschoff and Schmidt 2009:147). In a Germany-specific context, the generally generous German state welfare system is not automatically extended to the self-employed and 'the majority of self-employed people are not subject to any mandatory social insurance' (Buschoff and Schmidt 2009:155). In terms of labour laws, as 'employee-like persons' may have some rights in certain cases, but many 'do not claim their rights either because they do not know about them or because of their economic dependency' (Buschoff and Schmidt 2009:153). In any case, from the

document above, it is clear that the firm 'employing' the promoters is not going to be involved in any matching of contributions as would be the case in employment. Likewise, the shop in which the promoter is working avoids these costs, and the promoter is there as a 'visitor' from a '*Fremdenfirma*', or an 'outside company', as the pass/badge I received (with a €2 deposit) on entering one of the cash-and-carry wholesale outlets in which I assisted with product promotion, stated upon it.

The first time I visited Germany, a day trip during a school exchange in Alsace at fifteen years of age, I remember having cause to use the adjective '*fremd*'. In our school textbook, there was a useful line to use in case of being asked directions, when you yourself were a 'stranger': '*Ich bin hier fremd*'. In a broader sense, however, '*fremd*' has a number of different meanings. A quick consultation of the Oxford-Duden German-English dictionary reveals translations such as 'foreign', 'other peoples'' or 'strange' (Scholze-Stubenrecht et al. 2005:274-75). However, all these translations fall within the domain of externality. At the time when I received it, I did not consider the symbolic meanings of the '*Fremdenfirma*' badge, as the need to find the €2 for the deposit just to receive it was a more pressing issue. To draw inference from another term which contains the '*fremd-*' stem, the name and the €2 almost invoke the Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt*, the 'alienating effect' of epic theatre. As when the familiar is rendered strange in the theatre through reminders that events are not real, and distance created between audience and action, here the promoter as actor performs a task which might involve his own social alienation. Their own potential externality to that firm and its staff, as well as to the company whose products you promote, is highlighted. Under the guideline document above, colleagues and relationships to them might be quite literally ephemeral, whether they be from the firm hosting, or being promoted in the case that two persons are 'ordered' for the day by a company, as the promoter with whom I spent most time described it. Added to the sense of potential insecurity of income, the picture might seem off-putting for these reasons.

From documents to practice: how to become a promoter

Thus far, two main categories of potential problems have identified for the self-employed product promoter. Both affect wellbeing, but the first category is practical and concerns the need to maintain access to work in light of brief and temporary contracts. The second category refers to the social, in the sense that loneliness and isolation, as these brief and temporary contracts could result in fleeting and temporary social contacts. Is it, however, the case that these problems actually exist, or rather, are they merely hypothetical? To help to answer that question, I will introduce the opinions of three different product promoters with whom I was able to conduct interviews. Later I will also introduce insights gained from spending time with them, to varying degrees, carrying out the job of promotion, and indeed at one point at stands beside one another. However, before so doing, it is necessary to introduce them as persons.

The first, Rainer Schmidt,[29] was the promoter I met at the event I mentioned in Hamilton (2010c:47-49). He described his business as follows, and the imprecision over the nomenclature reflects the ambiguity of the role as seen above and further detailed below:

> I am a self-employed person, now eight years self-employed as a promoter, or in minor promotion – a merchandising agency [*Verkaufsforderungsagentur*] – or whatever you want to call it…

His partner and co-habitee Rosi Müller is also a product promoter, but their partnership does not extend officially to their business life, and they both keep their own and separate business licences and thus effectively operate as two firms. Rosi had been involved in product promotion before meeting Rainer. Indeed, their meeting and becoming partners in an emotional sense, and to some extent a business context, all occurred through promotion.

[29] Names again anonymised for confidentiality.

Like those in the previous chapter, the interviews here are similarly rich in 'life story' (Linde 1987, 1993) information. After taking voluntary redundancy from the sales department of the local branch of a global company, and his first business, a nightclub, not functioning well, Rainer and Rosi happened upon one another. Rainer told me:

> Rosi did promotion, and I met her at her stand! I was a customer, and she wanted to sell me wine. [...] I met her a month later again in [another shop].

Being basically unemployed,

> there was this break, I met Rosi, and we moved in together, and I had to do something, the disco was not working out any more, so what now? "Aah, do some promotion". [...] Rosi started it, but we developed it together, took the step, and it was not enough at the start, it takes a few years for you to build up your customer base. And I participated in that.

At first, she employed him, but as she also pointed out to me on a separate occasion – and I would myself highlight being in stark contrast to the document examined above – she would legally have to pay him even when no work was commissioned, as well as paying a contribution to his social security and compulsory health insurance alongside his own, which would have in any case to be paid. Rainer said this was never actually a problem – 'I always earned more than I cost' – but Rosi found the existential risk too great which was likewise 'too much for her nerves'. In a sense, whereas the manufacturing companies and retailers do not engage in employing promoters for reasons of maximising profit, Rosi also did not employ Rainer (after this initial phase) in order to minimise risk. However, in this case, the purpose was to hopefully guarantee existential survival.

When describing the founding of what is in some senses (but not officially) a family firm, Rainer peppered his speech with verbs with the '*mit*' particle. Casting a gaze back to Chapter 3, it will be remembered that in Fig. 3.12, a smiling lady on a GDR-era poster was attributed with a similar phrase using the verb '*mit schaffen*' (to create, with). I commented on the use of this mit-prefix above. It is used again here. The verb '*mitmachen*' was employed for 'do some promotion' and 'participated' highlighting here the sense of co-operativeness and togetherness

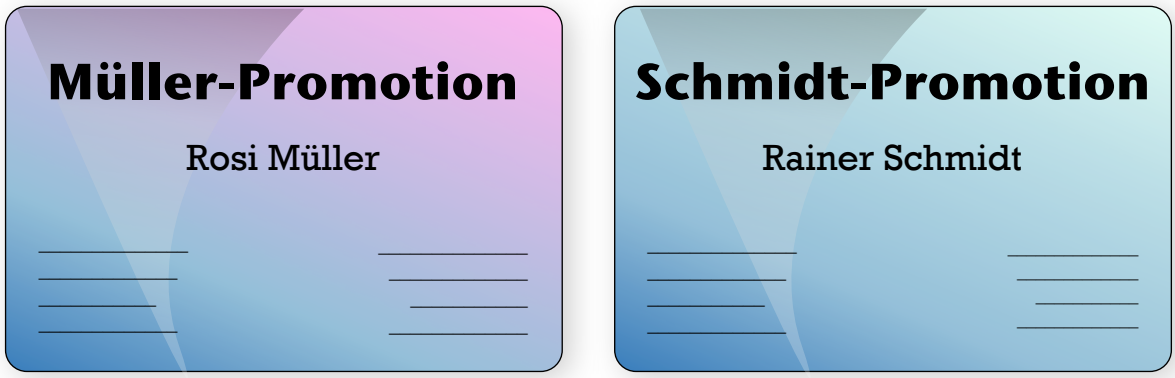

Fig. 6.3

The separate but togetherness can be viewed in their business cards – mock-up to maintain anonymity, yet sufficiently similar to the original design

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similarly viewed in the poster. To whatever extent this sense is suggested, the real situation for Rainer and Rosi is one where the process of working is indeed at times carried out together – at times even in the same location – but for them it became necessary for reasons of security and well-being to be legally apart. This is strongly reminiscent of the phrase used in an online forum, cited by Carrithers ([n.d.]), where an eastern German described life in the new Federal Republic as being '*miteinander aber ohneeinander*' ('together but apart', but literally 'with one another but without one another'). Here the '*mit*', on this occasion acting as a prepositional particle, is placed in stark contrast with '*ohne*', which suggests a strong sense of lacking. If there is one thing pertaining to Rosi and Rainer which symbolically demonstrates this, then it is their business cards. As can be seen in Fig. 6.3, these have the same basic design, and only the names of the firms, and the personal names and email addresses, and the highlight colours, are different. Rainer told me that this was deliberate, and even coordinated with 'pink for a girl and blue for a boy'. And thus he could say 'we complement one another', despite them being, legally, two firms. In a broader context, this idea of '*miteinander ohne einander*' also captures quite precisely the relationship between promoters themselves, between promoters and retailers, and indeed, most strongly, between promoters and producers. Attention will return to this below, but its applicability here, resulting from doubt over maintaining a steady flow of

contracts, was not limited to Rosi and Rainer. I was told (spontaneously) by a promoter who was working that day for a sparkling wine company that if the company cut its advertising budget, she was indeed at risk. But she seemed to work for them relatively regularly as this was the company name she placed beside her name on my notebook in case I needed to contact her for an interview.

It proved too impractical to interview that particular promoter, but I was able to interview another, the third person I referred to above. This person, Marta, lived south of Halle in the countryside, and promoted wine in general. She likewise highlighted the benefits for the producers, and the risks for herself. Talking of the employed representative of the firm, who receives the advertising budget and commissions her services, I asked if it would not have been better to have been employed by him. She replied that, 'no, that does not happen [...], all those who work for him have to be self-employed. You cannot be employed by the firm.' She went on:

> in terms of the *Krankenkasse* (health insurance administration), if I am self-employed, then the company has no work to do. Thus if I am sick, they have to pay me no sick pay. He can book me, when he needs me, at peak times. I need get no holiday pay. I am actually the type of *Mitarbeiter*, which we today call a temping agency who you bring in as much as you need.

Although at first this went well, and she enjoyed the freedom to choose which contracts to take on, when asked if things were going well in general, she replied that:

> When you do promotion you are always on the search for commissions. In recent times it has turned out that it is difficult because many firms today do not do any promotion – world financial crisis, they have no more money for such things. And I have naturally searched repeatedly.

Indeed, Marta had had to resort to seasonal part time work in an agri-food company. She had trained to be an industrial laboratory technician during the GDR period. After having her first child, the local area in which she lived had no childcare facilities, and she had had to leave work.

She had then found a position in a local agricultural cooperative, but the *Wende* and subsequent restructuring had cost her her job.

After this redundancy, Marta had engaged in several years doing additional business training, followed by some years employed. This was itself followed by a period of unemployment. After this she spent some time working for a wine company which also had financial difficulties. All the while she was heavily involved in the community life of her village. Then, on inheriting her family's small plot of vineyard, she had decided to become a promoter. Despite initially almost having enough commissions to work the equivalent of full time, a mixture of employment and self-employment was what she would now rather do in these unsure times. As she explained:

> The most optimal would be if I could find a half-day job in a firm for Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays. And then do promotion on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays. But I have not had the right luck yet. I hope it will work some time.

The benefits are clear, given what was noted about Rainer and Rosi above:

> That would be the ideal for me, that even in the three days I have no promotion I get this definite sum of money on which I can count. And it would be good if they would pay my health insurance contributions. I would be insured.

As I was to find out later, through Rosi and Rainer, Marta had taken up full time employment and decided to no longer do promotion – at least for the meantime. Despite both Marta and Rosi's sense of unease over future prospects of continuing gaining contracts, Rainer had been less worried about such becoming a reality. Indeed, although Marta had decided to take on employment, she had stated that the ideal had been a combination of employment and promotion, and then really only for strategic reasons. As a task, it seemed to be one which could be deemed sufficiently pleasurable and worthwhile to continue doing. And I was able to witness that people do continue to engage in it over longer periods.

During the times I was able to spend at events where several promoters were gathered together in one location (which I will detail below), people I was able to recognise were present

on separate occasions. Further, these re-encounters between promoters were sufficiently long-term so that customs could be developed. For example, on one evening when I was able to spend shadowing Rosi during a 'night shopping' event at a local cash-and-carry. A large number of promoters were present, I saw a number of examples of such interactions. One gentleman was most disappointed that Rainer was not with us, as he had brought some beer along. It had become the custom that he and Rainer would have a bottle in the car, as a *Feierabend* (end of working day) celebration of a job successfully completed. Rosi herself had brought along some stale bread which she 'always' gave to one lady as horse-feed, and in return 'always' got some eggs from the horse-owning woman's hens. Rosi, on another occasion, mentioned that she had a 'reputation' among other promoters for not suffering fools gladly. Further, people knew each other by their first names. It seemed to be normal that a promoter would go and greet each of the other promoters on arrival at these events. On each occasion, wherever it was, on arriving Rainer or Rosi would do this, and often personal names were mutually used. Rather than contemporaries, the promoters seemed to be much more like consociates, despite the potential rarity of their encounters.

Carrithers, as noted in Chapter 3, has written on the use of pronouns to make strangers familiar in the context of mediated texts (Carrithers 2008). Here, in comparison, rather than 'inchoate pronouns' of the contemporaries, the 'choate' pronouns of the consociate was discernible. By paying attention to the pronouns used by Rosi and Rainer, and others, I would suggest that it is further evidence of a sense of consociate collegiality. The German language, like many others, maintains a T-V distinction, meaning that there is a separate polite form alongside the familiar form of second-person pronouns (cf. R. Brown and Gilman 1960). In German specifically, in the singular, these are '*Sie*' and '*du*' respectively, both meaning 'you' as a form of address. As Fox, a linguist, notes, 'one effect of using *Sie* and its related forms (*Ihnen*, *Ihr*, etc.) [i.e. in other grammatical cases] is to establish a certain distance between speaker and hearer, while the use of *du* and its related forms (*dich*, *dir*, *dein*, etc.) implies a closeness' (2005:191). In this vein, and from my own experience from working in Austria and

Germany, this is used reciprocally in the workplace. For example, with the headmasters of the schools where I worked in Austria, I 'was *per Sie*', meaning that due to the differential in our statuses, we used '*Sie*' when in conversation, and likewise with the administrative staff. However, as Fox further notes, 'the reciprocal use of *du*, which is found in many groups – students, fellow workers, etc. – may be an expression of what has been called solidarity' (2005:191). In accordance with this, fellow teachers and I were in contrast *'per Du*'. Although socio-linguists Clyne et al. suggest that there is a tendency for 'older and middle-aged people' from eastern Germany to be 'more reluctant to adopt or accept unmarked T [here, *du*] use as it is reminiscent of political usage in the GDR' (2006:313), I witnessed it much among promoters when they were together. Indeed, when there to observe rather than take part at the beginning of events, and having been introduced as some variety of social scientist, I tended to be '*per Sie*' with the other promoters. But I detected a noticeable movement towards '*per Du*' instead after I had (metaphorically) donned the apron I am wearing in Fig. 6.2 above. In general, improper addressing can sound extremely offensive (Durrell and Hammer 2002:54) so care would be taken in this regard to choose correctly. Thus, in terms of language used, evidence of not only collegiality among the promoters, but also relationships being built over time, is evident despite them being *miteinander* whilst technically *ohneeinander*. They are colleagues, while not employed by the same firm. And despite this latter fact, they do get the opportunity to see each other more often, even if it is, as the promoters quoted at the outset noted, 'wherever, whenever' in this 'village'-like 'world of promotion'.

Given the evidence above that, despite the difficulties involved, people wish to remain product promoters of their own volition, and manage to, the question of how this is possible is raised. I will base my suggested answers in this and the following chapter on ethnographic experience. I mentioned above that I could spend time with Rainer and Rosi, and indeed I was often invited to visit their house for social events. Rainer often told me where and when he would next be working so I could come and visit. Although he sometimes worked far away (even exceptionally in the western *Bundesländer*), I visited him as much as possible in locations near to

Halle. It was never a chore as Rainer mostly promoted wines, spirits, chocolate and other confectionery! On those days I could watch him talk to customers, could discuss events with him, and partake of the products he was promoting. On some occasions I even made a purchase! Rainer and his friends once took me to Pudhys concert! On one of the occasions I interviewed Rainer, he came to my home and, at his request, I made Irish stew and traditional bread for him. As I will show later, sharing and reciprocal giving is very important in the 'promotion world', and this friendliness and kindness provides another hint of what might help make them and others successful. Rainer commented to me that he is asked by customers about how to become involved in promotion, and this suggests there is no shortage of persons willing to fill the role as a replacement. This suggests that there is pressure not only to be adequate, but to excel. Given Rainer and Rosi's continuing in their roles, and at times, having to themselves take on casual promoters in a relationship parallel to theirs with the producing companies, suggests that observing and learning from them is an effective way of discovering their own effectiveness. Further, that I managed to shift a great deal of wine in my two days, which pleasantly surprised Rainer, after putting these techniques into practice, suggests that they are valid. In addition, learning from Marta is no less valuable, as she managed to remain in the promotion world for a considerable time, until circumstances forced her into employment.

Rhetoric sellers

During the course on marketing led by the Dutch business advisor discussed in Chapter 4 (who also creates something, namely business advice), it was suggested that self-employed persons should spend at least 80% of their time on the acquisition of customers. And paramount in this process, brought to the fore by highlighting his belief in an eastern German deficiency in the task, was the ability to 'sell oneself'. If, from his broad experience in the service industry, a 'working assumption' is made that he is correct, 20% was still to be accounted for in other ways, including producing a product or service to be offered to end consumers. In comparison, the task of the product promoter is noticeably different in that they spend 100% of their time

acquiring customers. Yet for them this is not simply the case of acquiring customers for a physical product or service produced by them, or even made by someone else and then traded further by them. A part of their 100% on acquiring customers is spent on acquiring their *own* customers who are the producers, and to an extent the merchants, themselves. Naturally, a marker of their success can be found in their own balance sheets, in terms of profit or loss. However, the marker of success viewed as by their customers (who in a sense are simultaneously their employers) is their ability to sell their customers' (and likewise employers') products. This manifested itself during my stint promoting wine. Rainer made it clear I should ensure that I reported the products selling well at points when the cash-and-carry manager met each promoter on his rounds of the store. I complied, never really sure what 'well' meant, but the manager naturally seemed to like this, smiling at the news. I am sure he could scrutinise checkout sales reports later, but here, personal persuasion was the key. However it is not just here that persuasion is vital – indeed, it is the both the point of doing promotion, and the means of continuing to do it.

There is a significant concentration on persuasion in the task of the promoter which pertain particularly to the task of this thesis in investigating rhetoric culture. As noted in Chapter 1, persuasion is also the key role of rhetoric. This is a key tenet of the theory of sociality and rhetoric culture, where rhetoric is the tool in the act of so doing (cf. 2005b, a, 2008, 2009b; J. W. Fernandez 2010). Harriman notes, that as humans, 'social creatures competing for attention, respect and other forms of status, we take pleasure in being deceived, and our happiness depends not only on persuading but also on being persuaded' (2009:223). It is not only the cynic who could argue that advertising, persuading us to buy nice, shiny and tasty things for consumption and pleasure, fulfils such a task on some continuum depending on the individual's view. The task of advertising engaged in by the promoter, in talking to the customer, by offering them a sample and persuading them to purchase is deeply rhetorical in nature. It is a place where not only the promoter is an 'agent', and likewise the customer is a 'patient'. It is a very precise example of 'agency-cum-patiency', 'which recovers that

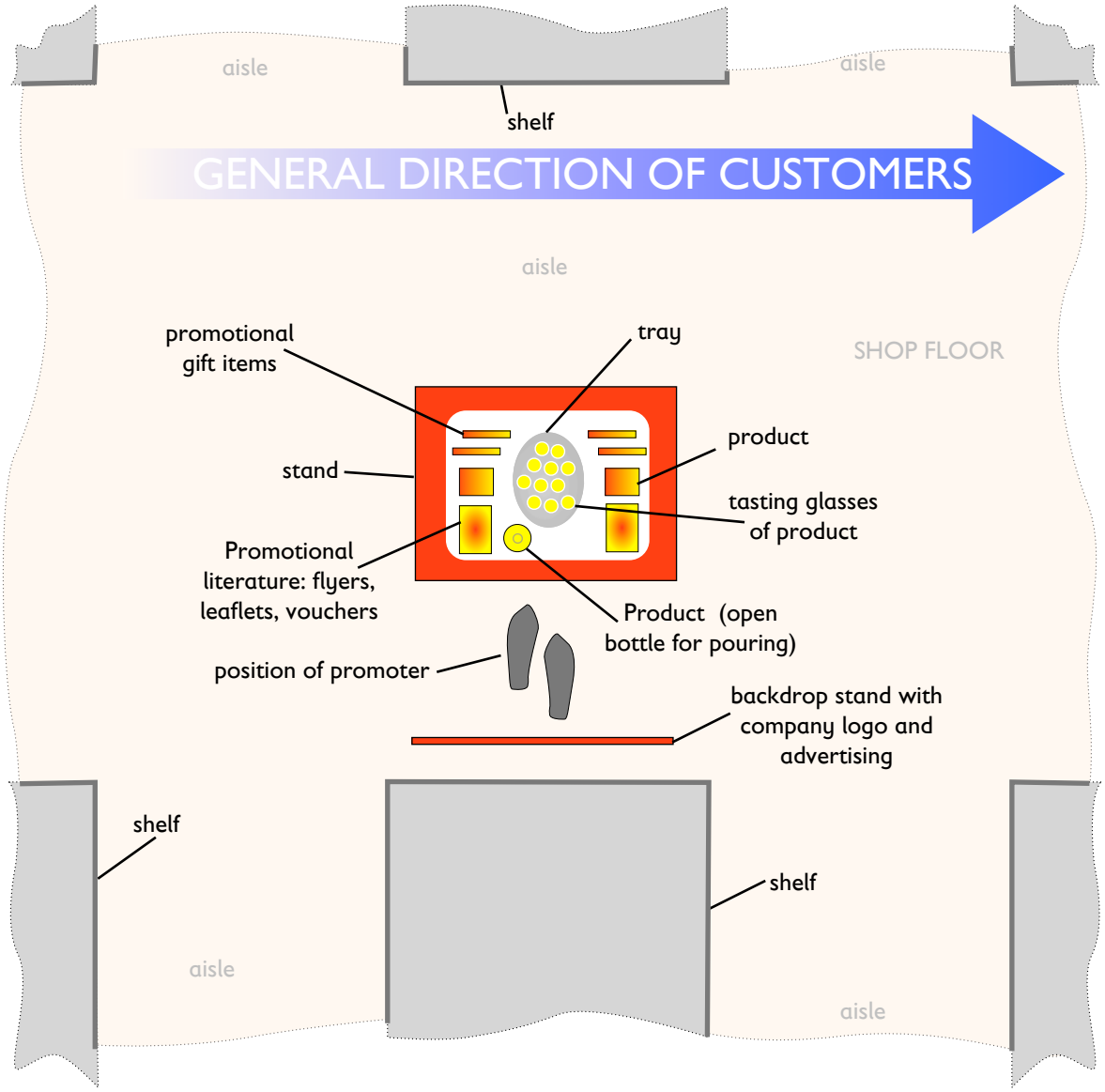

Fig. 6.4

Schematic diagram of the main field of action of an product promoter: here, advertising an alcoholic spirit in a supermarket (not to scale)

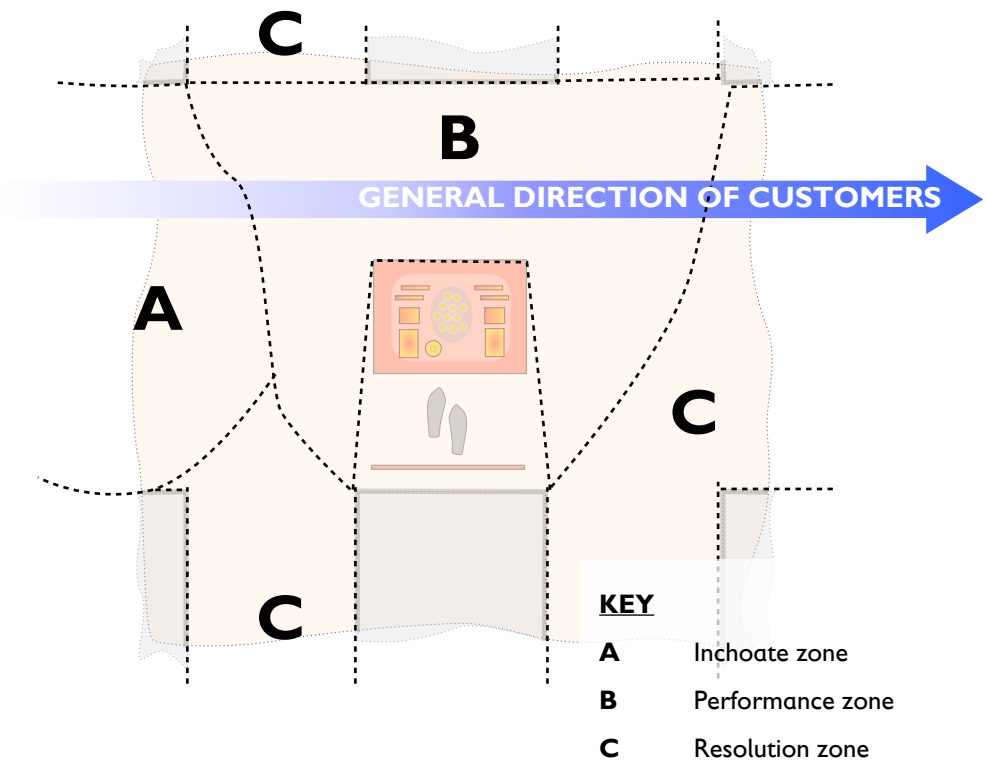

Fig. 6.5

Annotated version of promoter area diagram (not to scale)

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fundamentally *inter*active character that makes rhetoric integral to human sociality' (Carrithers 2005b:578, original emphasis). The promoter may actively speak to the customer, with the promoter as agent, but the customer can speak back, agree, reject, buy or even ignore, reversing the role. And the customers have the ultimate power of deciding quantitively whether you have been a success or not, in aggregate sales figures reflecting aggregate persuasions. Further, although the interaction can turn from an address into a discussion, the period of time which the customer must be persuaded to enter into the discussion, and/or to try the product, may well last mere seconds. Thus interactions must be persuasive and powerful, and the ability to succeed at this task matters most. The promoters as mini-corporations are thus 'persuasion corporations'. Whereas the chocolate manufacturer must worry about the quality of their confection as product, it is by the 'product' of persuasion that promoters are judged.

From Fig. 6.4 which shows an example layout of a product promoter's stand and its surroundings. This can be compared to Figs 6.1 and 6.2 for a more three-dimensional and face-on view. From Fig. 6.4 especially, it can be seen that the zone in which potential contact between a promoter and a customer is spatially relatively limited. This is the greatest reason why the time in which contact can be made is also short. The number of techniques a promoter can employ, however, is limited by their being provided in advance with the materials, either by the producing company or, to some extent, the store. If they are indeed made available, among the items over which one has little control are the design of the backdrop stand, the content of the advertising materials, the design of the product itself, and likewise the promotional items. However, alongside these fixed aspects, there is some discretion, but this really only amounts to positioning and layout of these items. What is much more important is that the successful promoter must make good use of them. For example, in Fig. 6.4, this is not the case. From having being taught by Rainer and Rosi, the promotional literature would go at the front, the gifts next, with the product behind, for full visibility. A rubbish bin beside the stand in which customers can jettison empty cups would also be very useful. Rosi sometimes promoted bonbons, and she searched some time for new tongs delicate enough to lift them without damaging them. Attention to detail is naturally important. It creates a sense of professionalism. Yet, before that, they must get the customer to interact, and to keep them interacting sufficiently to cause a purchase to be made. I argue below that to a significant degree, it is rhetorical success which makes the difference in these two tasks.

Talk to me, please: attracting customers

Product promotion is a task based in social interactions. If any evidence of that is required, then the fact that I met Rainer while he was doing promotion, and no less that he met his future life partner Rosi while she was engaged in it, is more than sufficient. This shows that there is great potential in these interactions. In spatial terms, this would have to occur in the area marked A on Fig. 6.5, an annotated version of the diagram in Fig. 6.4. This could be described as the

inchoate zone, the zone of the unknown. It is here that a 'situation' in sociality and rhetoric culture (SRC) terms is created. As noted in Chapter 1, this refers to the 'result of some episode of historicity', some happening of varying size or formality or proximity 'to which we must respond' (Carrithers 2008:162-163). Here, the situation is still inchoate, the customer is going to approach, and a promoter's task is be prepared to interact with them. In a sense, the expansiveness of this area is dependent on the promoter's visual and aural acuity, as well as line of sight. Area B represents the area in which the majority of interactions with a customer will occur, the zone of performance. Area C represents the resolution zone. In any case, it represents an area where it is unlikely that any performance is still possible, and thus may be a zone of lost opportunity if no persuasion occurs. In any case, it is indeed evident that due to the relatively small area of persuasion, and of inchoacy, there is not a large time period in which the situation can be resolved. In SRC terms, if a successful and persuasive 'movement' is to be made, it is here, at this point, which the promoter, the rhetorician, must act. If this is to be done, the addresses of the rhetoric, the customers, must be be sufficiently engaged.

Until this point, the persons which have been considered have seemed to be of the consociate variety in relation to the product promoters. These were other product promoters, as evinced by the use of the '*du*' pronoun which suggests collegiality, and the sense that recurring actions, such as the drinking of a beer after work, occur. However, customers seem much more to be of the contemporary variety, in Schützian terms. As a result, they will not know the micro-narrative that it is 'always' the case that Rosi exchanges left-over bread for eggs, and is a person who is nice to converse with. At most, the customer will know the brand, or recognise that there is something to taste, and in many cases, as I observed, they will not, especially in cases where the brand is a liqueur from abroad or far away in Germany. Reciprocally, the promoter will in the majority of cases not know the customer. Miller (1998) has argued that shopping is akin to an act of sacrifice, in that as deities are constructed as beings with wants to whom objects (such as smoke or meat) must be given, shoppers characterise their task as obtaining commodities to create and maintain social relations. While these relations are not

with supreme beings, these shopping acts obtain commodities to please and provision those closest to them. It does not require much to translate these latter persons and the relations to them to consociates and consociational relationships. It is plain that there is a clear difference between these consociates, such as husbands, wives, children or partners, and promoters. This is firstly in terms of personal knowledge of one another, and secondly, in the fact that the promoter is not the beneficiary of the purchase but rather encourages it to occur. However, as Miller demonstrates through his ethnography of shopping in North London, consociates and the relationships to them are intrinsic to the decision-making process during shopping. A promoter may be a mere contemporary, but as a person, they are in consociate relationships with other people outside the shopping environment. I suggest that the ability to move closer to the consociate category *vis-à-vis* the customer, and thus engage in the process as a character mirroring those who are the focus of that process, is key to product promotion. SRC is the key to unlocking how this occurs.

As a customer moves into the promoter's field of vision, moving through the inchoate zone towards that of performance, the promoter will have to make split-second decisions on how to address them, to begin the process of moving the situation away from inchoacy. As I have suggested, this occurs to a significant extent by dealing with these contemporaries/customers as 'types, those whom we can recognize and treat appropriately just insofar as we properly recognize their type' (Carrithers 2008:166) Carrithers suggests that here, the principle of 'paired types' 'such as "customer" and "salesperson" or "doctor" and "patient" [...] enable us to perform more or less creditably with total strangers' (Carrithers 2008:166). Of course, while this does certainly apply, there is more complexity involved. A 'customer' can have other generic designations. Carrithers suggests a few out of a multitude of possibilities, which in this particular case can overlap with other things such as 'customer': '"plumber", "bus driver", "classical musician", or "soldier"' (Carrithers 2008:166). He further notes that '"woman" and "man", "girl" and "boy", or their local equivalent, do a lot of generic work as well' (Carrithers 2008:166). However, unless, for example, a bus driver or a soldier is wearing her uniform in the

store, or a classical musician is tootling his trumpet there (or carrying it around at least), the promoter must work more at this latter, broader end of the generic scale. Yet this too is a continuum, and I would suggest that the greater their ability to place contemporaries/customers more accurately thereupon, the greater the ability of the promoter to succeed.

To some extent the world of business viewed from any scale is reliant on being as towards the more precise end of the generic scale as possible. Viewed from an SRC point of view, the market research industry earns a great deal of money globally on finding and employing ways in which to make the inchoate pronoun of 'they' refer to groups of more specific characters. In the case of British food retail giant Tesco, for example, there is a drive as in any business to allow the 'they' referring to 'people who spend money at Tesco' to refer to more persons. However, the push to make this happen comes from examples of decreasing the breadth of the persons referred to when that pronoun is used. For example, dunnhumby [*sic*], inventors of the Tesco Clubcard loyalty scheme, is a company whose task is 'crunching data from credit-card transactions and customer loyalty programs, the outfit reveals hidden and lucrative facts about clients' current customers' (Helm 2008). Fifteen million cardholders in the UK providing forty terabytes so far on their shopping by swiping their cards when shopping, has apparently saved £350 million on advertising by targeting customers more precisely (Wood and Lyons 2010). This is apparently powerful, and after a trial period of the Clubcard scheme, during a company meeting

> there was a 30-second silence after Humby presented the initial trial's results to the Tesco board, until the then chairman, Lord MacLaurin, declared: "What scares me is that you know more about my customers after three months than I know after 30 years." (Wood and Lyons 2010)

This, and that dunnhumby's services are very much in demand in other areas, and further that Tesco eventually bought 84% of dunnhumby shares with rumours of complete takeover following the packing of its board with Tesco representatives (The Grocer 2010), is a sign of the

importance of moving towards the smaller 'they', representing a smaller number of people, who can be targeted as customers much more precisely.

For example, if I were a beef seller in Northern Ireland, dunnhumby's data might be extremely useful in making the 'they' more precise in this way. Using their data for my own calculations with the benefit of time and a calculator, I could create a 'they' to whom I am most likely to sell. This 'they' would be shoppers in Carnegie Street in Lurgan, where 45.34% of customers buy beef, while worry least about Belmont Road in Belfast. I would know that the vegetables most bought while buying beef are root vegetables, onions and potatoes, and for example, 1kg swedes are purchased with 32.3% of purchases of that meat, so could target vegetable buyers. And the best selling mince package size is 880g and I should target it at younger families, and most certainly not at apparently meat-avoiding pensioners (Kent Business School et al. 2009). While I could not guarantee I could persuade a particular person who falls into that particular niche, the knowledge of it certainly increases the chances. Given the apparent importance of such knowledge of types, how does this translate into the world of promotion, if at all? It has been seen that the time a promoter has available to persuade a customer is short. In comparison, dunnhumby can use great computing power over a long period to construct their customer profiles and direct information towards them via vouchers, for example.

For a product promoter, significantly, this technological and temporal luxury does not exist. If a successful act of persuasion is to be made, it must be quick. Snap decisions must be taken about whom to address and what that address should contain. In this connection, during interviews with Rainer I asked him to describe his customers, and it was something we discussed regularly. Surprisingly, he claimed he could not his place customers into types. Instead, he said: 'Mostly I know when I see them. I know, if there's eye contact, then [sale]. Everything is from eye contact for me.' He had mentioned this before on a number of occasions, but in a separate interview he had also said:

> You do it. You study the people, your customers. Sometimes you do not have much to do and you think. For me, it is those who look, who take up eye contact, and then I see it – do I speak to them, or do I not? Or how they behave before.

Rainer maintained he could not place people into types in an interview, but he believed he had the ability to tell from afar, from physical signals, whether it was worthwhile attempting to persuade. Therefore I would suggest that outside the interview, from my experience watching Rainer in practice and talking to him about customers once they had moved on, he may well actually have an ability to typify people, despite claiming otherwise. Rainer could typify people and thus adjust his approach. He could make relatively broad statements. He could tell me that when he went to a particular supermarket, he would have to address people differently. Whereas in the department store people would need, and want, to be greeted with '*Guten Tag*' ('Good day', the standard northern German polite greeting), 'they' who shopped in the supermarket really just needed the price of the cheap sausage he was promoting shouted at them. He could compare the customers in the department store in Halle to its Leipzig branch, and note that the more cosmopolitan customers there could be more arrogant in more cases. Both Rainer and Rosi could with no hesitation negatively characterise the customers in one particular supermarket in a specific run-down area of the city. And more precise groups could be identified, for example, the 'museum visitors', people who did not buy, had no intention of buying anything, and were just there for something free to eat or drink. Another were those who came around after lunchtime in the department store on a Saturday looking for a free sample of wine or spirits as an aperitif – also not likely to get a sale from!

In terms of knowing customers from a glance, having stood in the same position with wine for two days, I can testify that the suggestion that relying on a glance from afar is helpful in identifying customers becomes almost automatic and tends to be surprisingly accurate. Further, from my time spent working on a supermarket checkout, and from talking to colleagues then, I know that it is possible indeed that a person can often tell from looking at a customer how they

will react to that seller. Of course, however, there were times when expectations are not matched, and similar feelings were awoken by my fieldwork experience here. Rainer told me that through time these skills of being able to tell from a distance would become honed. However, any eye-contact-based system of 'just knowing' is not based on this time-related honing based in retail environments alone. Through time, and not only in shops, on the basis of social relations Rainer has learned that people who look down often do so as a means of avoiding interaction. He likewise knows that lunchtime on a Saturday is a time when people get together, and upstairs in the department store is a restaurant. He has likewise learned that people who shop in more expensive shops and/or wear more expensive clothes have more money to buy expensive liqueurs. This is a process of being involved in social life, and learning from social relationships, over a period of time, from even before his time as a promoter. He can thus place these types of people, based on his experience, into narratives in his mind, and predict further what similar people will do in similar situations. In terms of body language, Carrithers has noted that 'a brief gesture, an inflection, a raised eyebrow can convey the equivalent of a novel to a consociate' (Carrithers 2008:167), and this is true. However, here, a promoter is required to do the same with persons who are mere contemporaries. This, in an important sense, reflects the nature of their task, namely persuading customers that they require items in their own lives, which only a consociate would actually know. When acting as a promoter I had no knowledge of whether a customer actually needed the wines, but I would try to persuade them, almost as a temporary consociate, that they did, while using knowledge from my consociate relationships. This happens most intensely, from a physical point of view, when a customer begins to move out of the zone of inchoacy to the zone of performance, and into close contact with the promoter.

While, in area of inchoacy, from a distance, customers might, in their ignorance, not mind being thought of in types, in some senses, this does not function when in direct contact with them. Instead of types, the promoter must deal with the person not as a 'they' but a 'you'. And as Carrithers has noted, this meets with individuals who as humans might be prone to think 'I am a

human being, I am a *person*, I assert my own generic designation!' (Carrithers 2008:167, original emphasis). The movement into the area of performance is when and where the work of the promoter as temporary consociate, dealing with individuals, has to begin in earnest. Marta noted that 'you cannot just say that they are a customer to me'. Rainer claimed often that he spoke to each customer individually, and altered what we might call sales patter, to each person. There were many ways of doing this and I will now present some of the most interesting, and how they relate to SRC. These are in addition to the above noted changing of greeting which depended on the location, and would regularly precede what follows here. Conversely, in one sense, in the first method, the promoter *can* appeal to the individual by appealing to the multitude. This is a particularly interesting and subtle use of pronouns. An example of this was when Rainer exclaimed to passing customers: 'something here for every taste' ('*etwas für jeden Geschmack dabei!*') or 'for everyone, something here' ('*für Jeden was dabei!*') However, this is subtly different than if he had called out 'something here for all'. In the latter, with an indirect pronoun being used, the individual is lost in a mass. The former example also uses an indefinite pronoun, however it employs a particular type, a 'distributive pronoun'. This is '*jeder*', and its function is described as follows: '*Jeder* refers to the individual elements of a group of things, *alle* to the elements of the group of things all together' (Eisenberg 1999:185). While referring to an actual plural, it is 'used in the singular' and 'often has an individual sense' (Durrell and Hammer 2002:115). Thus, pronominally, each and every *person* has something which would suit their *own* individual taste preferences and this seems to personalise the relationship to an important degree. The promoter knows what *everyone* needs, and indeed this is what the utterance itself states. But the promoter is not speaking to the masses merely as a mass. The promoter knows what *you* as an individual inside that mass, as a temporary consociate, needs. He is portraying himself as knowing about your everyday life, and trying to introduce something into it, with this same knowledge.

This use of pronouns to create a sense of consociality is not the only method I saw Rainer employing, and indeed, he also encouraged me to do it during my brief but instructive stint as a

promoter. In a sense, it is an on-the-spot version of the dunnhumby market research. In the interview in which he noted he could not typify customers, he went on to suggest the technique. After highlighting the importance of personalising interactions, he described it thus:

> I speak to each one personally. Or look what they have in basket, and if they have pasta in the trolley I say "today we have a super Italian wine which goes well with pasta", to create interest for it.

It is not only personalising the conversation which Rainer does in such cases. Rather, he is very much involved in a complex process of narrativisation, as might be expected from a SRC point of view. As noted in Chapter 1, narratives have been viewed as fundamental both to sociality and to rhetoric culture in general. Rainer must act here with a great intersubjective ability to anticipate the customers' needs, both material and cultural. It was also noted that this 'intersubjectivity' issues from the evolved cognitive ability 'to generate long connected skeins of actions and reactions' and 'to comprehend such complexity through narrative thought' (Carrithers 2005b:577; cf. 1992 for more detail). And it is this propensity to think in narrative terms which is also the basis of the mechanism, onto which rhetoric fits, used to deal with the situations, the 'vicissitudes of life' – which selling can certainly number among. By looking at, for example, pasta in the trolley he can create a narrative of possible uses when combined with his product. Hence, this is uttered as a narrative, as an act of persuasion, to the customer: 'super Italian wine which goes well with pasta'. It is, in terms of its length in words (6 in German), a short narrative. Despite this, it is relatively powerful, and a very appropriate example of a 'story seed', likewise detailed in Chapter 1.

As noted above 'story seeds' are 'minimal narratives' and therefore 'minute seeds of story which [...] unfold to make a movement and lead to a performance' and do 'condensed, affecting, effective work' (Carrithers 2008:40). Their 'mind-expanding' (ibid.) abilities here project the customer forward into *their own* home, sitting at *their own* table, eating the pasta, with a wine which could now transfer from the promoter to being *their own* – it all sounds so well thought out, and cosy, so why not give it a taste? The promoter has surreptitiously planted their wine

into the customer's narratives, placing a story seed into them which may indeed change their plans. And by placing the wine into the narrative, the promoter, if successful, will place the wine into the trolley. It is not limited to pasta. With some imagination anything can be narratively paired: meat with wine, asparagus with wine, coffee with cream liqueur, barbecue meat with beer. I even attempted narrativising using one of the particular combinations here when helping out Rosi. This technique also seemed to render unnecessary the need to ask if a customer wished to sample the product. In the interview, directly after discussing the technique, Rainer gave an example of bad practice which does the patent opposite, and with a mind-restricting rather than mind-expanding action. Criticising the question asked by so many promoters he asserted: 'if you ask if they want to taste the wine, they say no and go on past'. That is not a narrative with a happy ending at all for a promoter.

The importance of the past in creating the present narrative

The narrative work of a promoter is not limited to forward-narrativising, but also backward. To a large extent, this is a combination of going backwards in order to go forwards. Part of the process detailed above about knowing customers from a glance in the inchoacy zone falls into this latter category, and it is continued on into performance zone in higher intensities. It is particularly intense if the customer does deign to interact verbally with the promoter. A large part of the question of knowing how to address customers mentioned above also falls into this category – which is not surprising given the strong linkages between pronouns and narratives, with the former very often appearing in the latter to represent persons. Rainer would adapt his speech patterns and vocabulary to match people, including at times 'proletarising', as he once called it. Rainer's own narrative – again, his 'life story' – is relevant in this regard. As he presented it to me, he was very proficient at school, but moving from the countryside to Halle when his father was promoted meant he was no longer the best in his class and stress from the move meant his grades suffered. Rather than study, he learned advanced applied mechanical technology at one of the larger facilities south of Halle, also detailed in Chapter 3. His father

had been a teacher and had become a professor at an educational research facility, and in terms of party and social standing, his family were relatively privileged. A poster child for the GDR, always involved in sport within the FDJ (see Chapter 3), these in combination with a good party family pedigree meant he could perform his military service in the Felix Dzerzhinsky Guards Regiment, a paramilitary unit of the *Stasi* tasked with guarding important sites in Berlin. He managed to gain a role involved in training, and after completing his compulsory service went back to the factory. Given his ability to give instruction he was tasked with being involved in teaching the school pupils who came to visit factories one afternoon per week as part of their training as workers (cf. Chapter 3), and was also involved as a volunteer in the FDJ in keeping with his job. In the mean time he got married and had a daughter. Rainer enjoyed the parties, the social life, and the camaraderie. Things suddenly changed. Despite this unblemished record, more than a year before the *Wende* he decided he could no longer stay involved in the party system and resigned.

After admonitions at home and at work, he left and eventually found work in a factory in Halle. It was in this factory that he spent the *Wende* period, and remained after its subsequent purchase by the western corporate giant who he became a salesperson for. While his personal life was overshadowed by divorce, he worked there for a number of years. After a successful stint in sales, rationalisation meant he took the voluntary redundancy which led to the discotheque and then to promotion. Rainer has obviously done many tasks and I asked him whether the GDR had given him the abilities, either in terms of connections or education, to facilitate his current business. He replied that it was more to do with being from an enlightened home:

> From my general upbringing, I can speak about something with everyone. And it does not matter what you were then [in the GDR]. If your general upbringing was good, you can express yourself correctly in any situation, like how to behave. [...] I can respond to someone who wants to be spoken to a bit more ordinarily, as much as with the boss of the opera house. It's this general way of behaving.

> But that has nothing to do with the system, it is more to do with how you learned within your family.

It would be easy to highlight Rainer's privileged upbringing as having brought him privilege now. He is a successful promoter, without question. Despite this, it is important to recall the legal framework under which promotion is carried out, as well as the inherent precariousness. Further, Rainer himself is very aware of the potential perception of loss of status he has undergone, and discouraged his daughter from going down the same path, instead recommending a university education. The former teacher might now meet pupils while standing in a shop behind a table, wearing an apron. He described it as follows:

> When you are successful in a company you are more socially mobile. Here you are a bit more of an "*Eigenbrötler*" (loner/misfit).

Despite this, it is clear that Rainer has had more chances than most to experience diverse situations and relationships within his life. It is from these that he had been able to learn how a broad range of people react in situations, and from the example given above, not least from his teaching that someone who looks down does not want to answer your question.

This issue of people looking away, as well as the sense of low status which Rainer suggested people might think he has despite his enjoyment of his work, raises the question of how customers regard promoters in terms of their relationship to customers, the store and the company. During my wine promoting activities I clearly sensed that customers thought I was indeed related to the company. In the mixture of wines I was offering samples of were South African reds. These were highlighted as the main offer. I have been learning German for many years, and have lived and worked in Austria in a region with a very strong accent. The area around Halle also has a strong regional accent and it is clear that I do not speak in that way. In Austria people sometimes ask if I hail from Germany, and one customer during the promotion asked me if I was of Austrian extraction. However, generally, under stress, my language becomes less authentic. As this was a stressful occasion, my accent German suffered from Englishness. This, combined with the South African provenance of the wines, and likely my

Fig. 6.6

View of, and from, Marta's part of vineyard (above), and her pleasant interviewing – and wine-tasting – table (below)

wearing of an apron with a wine company logo thereupon, resulted in a significant number of (non-hostile!) enquiries whether I had been sent specially from South Africa for this purpose! Interestingly, the gentleman who enquired about Austria had lived in South Africa for a period so it must be assumed he could not find any hint of that accent. However, I do not suggest that this is the only reason for the impression that promoters appear as company employees. The process of creating narratives is witnessed once again, in the form of being able to recount company narratives to show that the promoter is also its consociate, and not only the customer's.

From having spent time with Rainer, I am able to recount the history of many of the various products he promotes, on demand. These stories are crafted to show quality and contain interesting nuggets to evoke interest. No attempt is made to distance the narrator from this narrative, even if it is not always the case that a conspicuous effort is made to claim status as a long-term employee. One of these narratives from Rainer's promotion portfolio relates to the exotic fruit used to create a particularly cloying cream liqueur. With customers, Rainer was able to refer to a television documentary about the animal who also likes to become inebriated on the fruit. The customers, if they remembered this 'cultural item', laughed. More importantly, they often purchased if they did. Another such narrative relates to how one herbal bitters brand got its peculiar name, told to much hilarity and piqued interest. Watching Rainer, the observer gains the impression of someone very well aware of what must be his own company's products, which he has been sent out by his employer to promote. In a purely contractual terms this is not the case, and as my own experiences above show, it is quite possible that the connection is brief. During my own promoting stint I was to learn how this knowledge is received. The company will likely provide a data sheet with the most (from the customer's perspective) fascinating facts detailed thereupon. This is matched in terms of tasting notes, if an alcoholic product such as wine is involved.[30] Thus the promoter, who may be long experienced

[30] In terms of such tasting notes, it is interesting to note which manufacturers produce this genre of text. Alongside alcohol, it is chocolate which is the focus of such descriptions.

like Rainer, or may only have learned the interesting information that morning, can appear with confidence, recount the narratives, offer advice on the product – and hopefully sell it. I, for example, quickly learned why the wine bottle of one of the other brands (on offer alongside the South African) was an unconventional shape, and more importantly, the narrative of historical development which had led to the design. This ready made tale, was easy to tell convincingly.

Compared to Rainer, Marta, however, is more of a pronoun user at this point in interacting with customers. She is a prolific user of 'we' and 'our' when referring to products in precise detail. On the day I met her, she was accompanied by the *Weinkönigin* of the region, the 'wine queen' who is chosen each year to represent the producers' association in their marketing, both in print and in person at events. Marta referred both to the wines during our interview, and to the wine queen herself, as 'our'. It is certainly the case that as was noted above Marta is employed on a freelance basis by the producers' cooperative's representative and not the cooperative itself. However, Marta is in the strange position of being a member of that cooperative herself, and simultaneously promoting its wines freelance at arm's length. She is able to earn some money from providing her grapes to the cooperative, but relies on the caprice of an employee of that cooperative as to whether she can earn money from taking part in selling what she had a part in producing. However, Marta's lifelong experience of wine – which includes serving over the years at the region's annual wine festival – provides her with extra knowledge and which can thus increase her own appearance of authenticity in the eyes of customers – although she actually is 'authentic' as a grower in any case. When I watched her pouring out and offering samples, Marta talked naturally, and passionately, about the wines she promotes. It was no different during our interview, which without question ranked most highly for the beauty of its location, the view from which can be seen in Fig. 6.6. As we sat in the shade on the hillside above her rows of vines, towards the end of the interview, she opened the bottle of wine she had brought with her, and before inviting me to partake of some sustenance in the form of home-made open sandwiches, she conducted what to all intents and purposes was a professional presentation of the wine.

Once the cork was removed, the bouquet sniffed, the technique of so doing explained, and the quality confirmed, the history of the wine was recounted as it was left briefly to breathe. Although it did not come from the cooperative's cellars, she could tell me the history of the private vintner, how his son had taken over its running, and how he 'lays great importance on well-managed vineyards' – followed by a hearty 'to your health!' and the first sip of the chilled *Grauburgunder* (pinot gris). A tasting pause, then a discussion of the grape varieties, and the taste: 'This light fruit, finely nuanced, we call it. Fine nuanced fruit aromas and this acidity which you taste in the finish'. This 'finish' apparently characterises the region's produce:

> Here behind, look here (pointing inside the mouth)... that characterises our wine, when one has drunk a sip, you have this taste in the mouth for a time, and that is called the "the long finish".

The experience was sensual and unhurried, taking time to savour the taste and aroma, as she spoke of 'our wines', 'our region'. It is clear that she believed, as she noted,

> It must also come from the heart, and the people notice with me too, I am a vintner myself, it comes from the heart.

And alongside this passion, with her knowledge, she was able to tell from both speech and deportment (such as where the customer gripped their wine glass) how to approach her customers correctly. She could, for example, provide more detail to those she recognised as 'connoisseur' (or those who thought they were and her not, much to her annoyance). Through this, she could bring people closer to the wines which she thought had been neglected during the GDR period.

It is clear the Marta has deep knowledge of the wine making process, and has a deep personal connection with the region and its produce. However, it was stated above that she had entered full-time employment. It is important to note that there is indeed evidence that her own skills are not the factor involved. Marta had diversified into offering evening wine tasting evenings, whose programme she thus described:

> I sing to my wine tastings, tell jokes, fun, stories from the area. I tell them about the wine, and how it grew here, and how the people here treasure the wine, and it [the wine] gets carried out over the [wine region] borders too.

Apparently evenings had been successful among her customers:

> They want to be able to turn off from the day to day, they want fun, they want to be happy, drink a good wine, hear a bit about the region,. I think it is very important in these times.

She was planning to do more of this, but in terms of the promotion in wholesale and retail, and daily contracts had been drying up in the straightened financial times. She had searched, noting, 'I have to do something for it myself. And not wait until my representative says, 'come here there is something for you'. In this task, something particular was needed, and it appears on the list of personal characteristics and non-physical tools required by the self-employed, as listed on the *Am I the business type?* (Schön 2008) acrostic as seen in Chapter 4. However, as was viewed in that chapter, there was acceptance of the requirement. Yet, as was seen there, it was noticeably tinged with 'east German idiom' (Engler 2004). I had asked her whether anything particular from her life in the GDR helped her now. She told me,

> I always kept things together (*miteinander*) [...] we helped each other out then. But then after the *Wende* there was a time where everyone searched for their own happiness for themselves.

However, she regarded it time for a turn back towards the values of the GDR:

> but now, in these bad times, you really notice that you really need networks, big networks, you know many people to be able to exist, to get a job there, a job there because who else will help you?

The message was plain: 'all these promotions people [...], they have to stay together (*zusammenhalten*)'. Rainer had also highlighted the importance of contacts. He explained that he and his friend (who we will meet at the end of the next chapter) sometimes pass on work to each other:

> And with Matthias, when he has something he cannot take on, he says, Rainer you do it, or if I have something and cannot do it, he takes it on.

I do not wish to suggest here that Marta had been forced to leave promotion due to a lack of contacts. She believed that networking was effective among promoters, and indeed, Rainer had passed her on details of a part-time employment in wine sales which he had thought ideal for her although they were by no means close friends and in regular contact. However, he highlighted competition as very real, and at one point mentioned that he felt uncomfortable when he was seen to have too many contracts, when others had none. Here, once again, is the appearance of the eastern German idiom, highlighting reticence and being *miteinander*.

Conclusion – and further

In this chapter I have shown that being a freelance product promoter has the character of being similar to normal employment in terms of work, but imbued with the risk of self-employment. It is also an area where great skill is required in order to succeed and to minimise that risk. In previous chapters I suggested that eastern Germans possess a 'consociational personhood' on the basis that they feel they are particularly adept at thinking of the needs of others and being able to appreciate their needs. They place importance on the abilities of this in others and thus treasure it when others treat them in the appropriate way. It is clear in this chapter that product promoters not only need consocial ability to function, but also to excel. As excellence is required to maintain a stream of commissions and related revenue, having particularly strong consocial abilities is a distinct advantage. Rainer and Rosi, who have managed to survive in the competitive market of product promoters, seem to have an excellent sense of what their customers require, despite the stress this places upon them. I conclude here that this is further evidence of that consociational personhood, as this extreme example shows that the skills required are appreciated by their customers – both above on the level of producers and retailers, and below on the level of end consumers of products – and they keep going. In the chapter which follows, the promoters who were the focus of this chapter remain in centre stage.

However, whereas in this chapter their own consociational skills were the key, it will be seen below how the materials promised by the instruction document they receive, are put to good use to further their success and to create sociality. This is done in such a way as to render the task more enjoyable in light of its precariousness, and to recreate the social patterns of the past.

7 The mass-gift in promotion

Generosity in the plural, with singular importance

Introduction

In the previous chapter it was possible to discern the tasks that a product promoter must do to perform their job to a satisfactory level despite being faced with limited freedom of action as regards choosing advertising materials and style. It is a set of tasks which requires skills inherent in the evolved human ability to create sociality, the ability to learn from experience, to narrativise and to rhetoricise. It has been seen that it is also important to have contacts, and that it is indeed possible so to do. If a cabinet-maker had too much work, and decided to recommend another cabinet-maker to a potential customer, then this would likely be based on both the quality of the other cabinet maker's work, perhaps special skills, and also social networks. If a promoter is seen to be a producer of persuasion (based on sociality) it follows from this that a promoter would recommend another promoter on the basis of their product – not a cabinet, but persuasion based on sociality – and also their social networks (sociality-based too). Thus, it might be suggested that sociality among product promoters is particularly important for the reason that a recommendation which is poor damages reputations.

This seriousness of the situation is particularly pointed given the legal framework in which the promoters work, and in light of the decreasing advertising budgets as noted by Marta. Further, and no less, the environment promoters work is one in which the promoter can become a lonely *Eigenbrötler*, as Rainer noted. It seems that, in order to build up social networks for sociality's sake – or simply put, for friendship – it becomes even more relevant. While it was noted above

that Rainer always drinks a beer with a certain promoter after an event, or that Rosi brings stale bread for a certain promoter, and that people speak using the informal T ('*du*') pronoun, the interactions studied thus far deal mostly with customers. In this section, attention moves to a particular aspect of interaction, and a form of rhetoric, which officially has customer persuasion as its intended function. However, despite this intention it is used by promoters for the purposes of creating sociality among themselves, and in some senses, as a bonus in light of the nature of their work. These are 'mass-gifts'. The 'mass-gift', a term coined by Bird-David and Darr (2009a,b), is the basis of one of the most noticeable aspects of the task performed by promoters. The mostly verbal rhetorical strategies studied in Chapter 6 are, if performed well, almost rendered unnoticeable through their naturalness. However, these mass-gifts are hard to avoid, as the techniques viewed in Chapter 6 are employed in order to focus customer attention on receiving them.

Defining mass gifts

In terms of what a mass-gift represents, Bird-David and Darr, through ethnographic examples suggest special offers and rebates in Israeli supermarkets (2009b, a), and product samples in the US mass-produced electronics components market (2009a; cf. Darr 2006). They also, however, note that

> gifts are frequently offered to buyers of cosmetic products in the USA, while "rebate" is the most universally practised means. Free food-tasting is common in some USA supermarkets. Small commodity samples are sometimes given as presents to buyers of magazines in the UK, while price cuts and "savings" are used more widely there. (Bird-David and Darr 2009a:310)

These are likewise classified as mass-gifts in their view (2009a:313). Noting the great 'extent to which research after Mauss (2002[1925]) has continued to focus on "the gift" separately from the study of "the commodity"' (2009a:306), Bird-David and Darr posit that the mass-gift is something which has the qualities of both. They suggest that it is both 'constituted rhetorically

or dramaturgically as an exchange that is external to idealized market exchange, in which money buys commodities' (Bird-David and Darr 2009b:123) but that in all reality, the object still, in terms of its usage value, has qualities of a commodity. The giving, and receiving, of one of these mass-gifts, is in most cases (apart from tasting) dependent on a purchase of something which is not a 'mass-gift', that is, in a market transaction. This may well be the other percentage of a container that contains a percentage which is mass-gifted. Or it may well be an additional container of the same product being mass-gifted (e.g. 'buy-one-get-one-free') or indeed another product altogether. These 'gifted' objects, as items with a value which would otherwise have to be paid if not gifts, and which rely on another product's purchase to obtain them, and have an ongoing use-value, are thus commodities.

Further, Bird-David and Darr suggest that unlike a traditional gift, where the person giving it is personally known to the recipient and thus building close reciprocal obligations and social ties, in the case of mass-gifts, 'while the identity of the giver, typically a specific manufacturer or brand name is clear, the receiver remains anonymous, and is constructed as a mass consumer' (Bird-David and Darr 2009b:123). Gregory (1982, 1997), one of the most strident maintainers of the gift/commodity distinction, or 'dichotomy' in his terms, suggests that all transactions can be placed onto branches on a tree diagram, and thus represent a 'finely graded set of ten categories' which 'do not form a continuum, the favoured linear image of those who prefer fuzziness to dichotomies' (1997:53). It will be seen below that mass-gifts are prone to fuzziness, like some subatomic particle which can be in two places at once, moving around such a diagram depending on who is viewing them, and for which purpose. In this sense, their 'social life' follows the tracks of gift exchange like a *kula* object, while at the same time follows market exchange processes. In sum, these things have an active if ambiguous 'social life' (Appadurai 1986). Given their ability to assume differing values and statuses at different times, they have a most interesting 'biography' (Kopytoff 1986).

In my experiences in German supermarkets and cash-and-carry wholesale outlets, the varieties of mass-gifts given by promoters were predominately product samples. However, promotional objects were also widely employed, and a selection of these can be viewed in Fig. 7.1. Here it is important to consider the status of these objects as mass-gifts as time progresses through the exchange process. Object (k) of Fig. 7.1, for example, is a high quality corkscrew of the 'waiter's friend' type. The item is produced by a Spanish manufacturer. Unemblazoned with a company logo it is commercially available. Price-comparison websites give a price therefor of £7.50 in the UK, or €10 in Germany. Even with multiple item discounts, there will be some noticeable outlay for a wine company wishing to purchase and customise them for promotional purposes. However, at this point, a potential customer of the wine company will no longer have to pay money for that object. This is only in a nominal sense, of course, because a purchase of something else, a bottle of wine at least, is required to receive it. After that purchase, the corkscrew still has value as a commodity to the customer as a high quality tool for opening corked bottles, and also removing metal crown caps. Apart from object (i) (unless the customer collects pin badges), all the objects in Fig. 7.1 retain some use.

Product samples are different to a degree. No purchase is necessary by the customer, even if some person may feel a light moral duty after receiving something for free. Further, once that small amount of liquid, if it is wine, has been swallowed, it has been consumed and its use-value vanishes. What is similar in both cases is that the mass-gift has been declared an object which is gratis when used in and for promotional purposes. In the cash-and-carries, for example, if the object was not a 'one prepared earlier' usage of a cake mix to provide samples of the finished product, for example, this process involved the affixing of a special sticker to the item. These stickers were obtainable from the store management, and the cost of the items thus stickered – and thus declared as being for tasting purposes – then billed to the producer (see Fig. 7.2). In one of the cash-and-carries, the inability to locate the necessary supervisor who could issue these stickers caused some fuss, and much agonising and debate occurred between Rainer and a another promoter about whether they could indeed begin tasting by opening a bottle without

a	b	c	d
e	f	g	h
i	j	k	l

Fig 7.1 Selection of mass-gifts

(a) coffee measure from coffee company **(b)** baseball cap from beer company **(c)** wine bottle thermometer from mineral water company (Coca-Cola brand) **(d)** model truck from beer company with co-branding from Halle ice-hockey club **(e)** asparagus knife from wine company 1 **(f)** supermarket trolley lock token from coffee company **(g)** logo figure keyring from chocolate company **(h)** corkscrew from wine company 2 **(i)** pin badge from spirit company **(j)** shopping bag from herbal bitters company **(k)** corkscrew from wine company 1 **(l)** jug from powdered coffee-and-milk beverages company

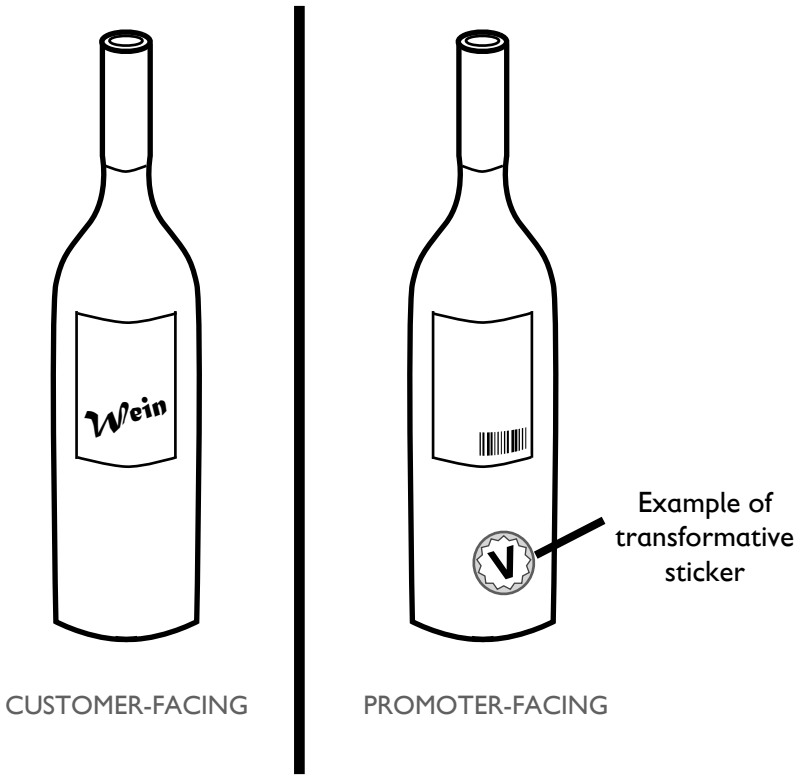

Fig. 7.2

The transformation of a saleable wine bottle into a mass-gift ('V' here represents '*Verkostung*', or 'tasting'). The bottle is marked, but not so that a customer would notice the significance of the sticker.

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this symbol on it yet. Eventually it was decided that custom would be lost if not opened, and opening occurred, but only after much agonising. In contrast, this transformative process for a corkscrew takes place in some headquarters when the decision is made to place an order with a company to produce promotional objects. What links both is that while the intrinsic value of the item remains before consuming or receiving by the customers, the extrinsic status has altered to an object free of monetary cost to the end-user. In one case, however, a promotional sticker was marked with a €0.25 '*Schutzgebühr*' ('nominal fee', but literally 'protection fee'). Although this was never demanded, this case where it is explicitly stated makes plain the idea that these promotional items are offered with an intrinsic requirement that a purchase is made.

Using mass-gifts to sell

The principal reason for which mass-gifts are employed by companies is to increase their sales, through the agency of product promoters. Later I will demonstrate how promoters use them to build social networks with one another. However, it is first necessary to concentrate on how promoters use the mass-gifts for their *intended* purposes. Although Bird-David and Darr suggest that the explicit use of the term 'gift' for these objects is most noticeable in an Israeli context, it is not completely unknown to hear the noun *Geschenk* (gift) or the lexeme *schenken* (to gift) used in such contexts in Germany. Fig. 7.3, an offer from a spectacles company and its associated loyalty scheme, is a particularly explicit case.[31] Among promoters, where the physical mass-gift as opposed to simple price reductions or percentage rebates is at the centre of the task, the use of the term seems more prevalent, although not universal. For example, the term 'gift' is not used when offering the customer a sample. This is, however, not to say that there is a great deal of rhetorical energy in that act. There are two main foci for this rhetorical energy. Firstly, it involves persuading the customer to actually partake of a sample, and largely this involves getting engagement as described and analysed above in Chapter 6. Rainer's advice to avoid a direct question such as 'would you like to taste…?', and his ability to create narrative interest, are potent examples. If further narrativising occurs, it will be within the scope of discussing flavours, taste sensations, much as Marta did above when we sat upon the hillside where her vines grew. Further, it will see discussion of uses of the product, the planting of story seeds likewise detailed above.

To a certain degree, the second focus, physical rhetorical action, is of equal or greater importance. The amount of time in which this occurs, the style, and indeed its importance, depends on the product itself. A cheap mechanically-recovered-meat sausage slice may be just placed on paper cake cases on a plate, with cocktail sticks provided for lifting the objects.

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[31] Further examples I have seen include a mobile telephone company's 'Whoever would like to transfer their phone number when coming to us gets gifted a month of calling to all German networks!', and a druggist's 'Happy hour! Every customer will get a shower gel gifted during this hour!'.

However, for a more luxurious item more attention to detail is necessary. For example, Rosi searched for stylish and dainty, yet practical and hygienic, tongs for handing customers confectionery products to set the correct tone. Rainer impressed customers by using a special pouring nozzle for his wines, and in fact they often asked where such an item could be purchased. One effect is to initiate conversation, and in general, I noticed that the more engaged a customer became in discussion, and the sharing of narratives, the more likely they were to purchase. Once again, the creation of an appearance of consociality aids selling. To a large extent, this is as important in creating an appearance of competence as knowledge of a company's product and its history. Further, there is transferability, as tongs could be used for various confectionery manufacturers' products, or indeed other products. And a wine bottle nozzle will fit onto any company's receptacles. For wine, especial potential for showing either competence or incompetence exists, given the various rituals involved with that particular beverage. Indeed, it was noted above that Marta could tell from where a customer held a glass whether they were a connoisseur or a novice – and a '*Schaumschläger*' (hot air merchant) if they arrogantly acted like the former but really were the latter. In such circumstances, politeness is important!

Above, it was noted that promoters must make use of the limited autonomy they have to enable them to excel, and until the introduction of mass-gifts into the mix, was seen to be in the use of verbal rhetoric, based on intersubjectivity. This gave the impression to customers that promoters were likewise consociates of the firm being promoted, and therefore experienced and knowledgable. However, the mass-gifts themselves have further potential to create this impression: its transformation from plain commercial commodity to mass-gift, which no longer carries a purchase price. It is 'free' and can be distributed at will, albeit within some seemingly imprecisely-defined limit that the company will pay for. However, the actual gifting process, the tasting, is controlled by the promoter, in that they control the amount given to a customer. This might be the provision of two pieces of chocolate rather than one. Or, as I suggested in the description of a promoter's role at the beginning of the previous chapter, perhaps a little

refill of the sampling glass! This, of course, is a manifestation of generosity. This apparent generosity also suggests a certain complicity with the customer (suggesting consociality with them) and also that they are likewise in a long-term consociational relationship with the company which suggests the promoters are allowed, or at least know the limits of how much can be gifted. This is also the case with promotional items.

In terms of the use of 'gift' words, compared to free samples, promotional items are, in my experience, more often described by promoters as 'gifts'. It is true that not all products are promoted using co-branded items, however Fig. 7.1 shows that many are. From this small collection mass-gifting seems especially prevalent as a practice for those items Germans term *Genussmitteln*, literally 'means of enjoyment': non-essential stimulants and intoxicants! In general, during my own work as a promoter I found that these promotional items did indeed aid in getting customers to purchase. For example, I managed to get two people to take two bottles of the white wine merely with the mention of the asparagus knife, and this was an oft-repeated occurrence. Indeed, one elderly gentleman, whose wife had received the asparagus knife (Fig. 7.1 e) from me while he had been talking to his granddaughter and not noticed it, on its discovery came back specially to thank me for such a useful item. Rainer's customers were happy to receive stickers, pin badges and small free samples which were also not for immediate

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'250 extra points [=€2.50] + frame gifted'

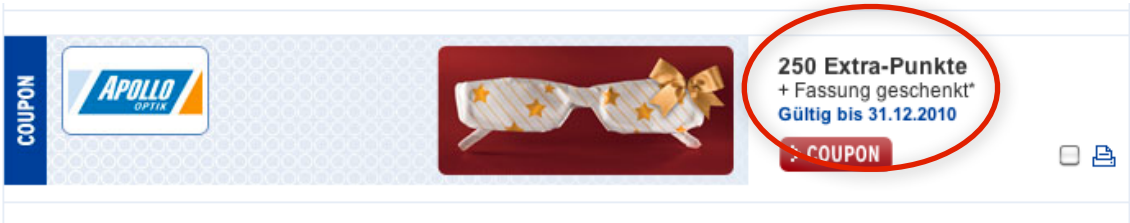

Fig. 7.3

Special offer from major spectacles chain in cooperation with major loyalty card scheme

tasting. It may well have been because of my novice role, but I found that I also enjoyed *giving* these objects to persons who had purchased. Indeed, there was some increased pleasure in being extremely munificent by giving two knives instead of one. It was nice to see customers smiling.

Conversely, from watching Rainer and Rosi at work, it seemed they found it very disagreeable when customers tried to take the items when not purchasing. It was noted above that in one case some stickers were marked with a nominal charge of €0.25, which throughout my time watching the promotion of the product was never demanded of customers. The reason for this was that the sticker was never given to someone who had not purchased the product. Rainer and Rosi attempted to act as regulators of giving. Although as a case where an explicit charge is indicated it is exceptional, the sticker confirms the findings of my wider experience. In making explicit the implicit nature of the 'free-ness' of these 'free gifts', it shows their 'free-ness' exists only because of the related product's 'un-free-ness'. Despite this, Rainer told me that people regularly attempt to lift these promotional objects without permission, and he has to remind them that they are not free to take. Rosi became irritated when customers requested objects for free, including, for example, a man who asked for an extra pen because his daughter 'collected them'. This was, however, after she had consented to his initial request for one without having purchased. In situations where purchases were made, as noted above, such requests were granted without rancour. Additionally, after one of my walks around one of the cash-and-carries while observing Rainer, on my return he told me he had just caught a man who had been trying surreptitiously procure a badge whilst his back was turned. He subsequently had had an embarrassing (for the customer, at least) conversation with him while that person was trying to manoeuvre the item into his pocket without this being noticed! However, in such situations Rainer saw a heightened potential for getting the person to buy.

Although Rainer's awkward customer conversation represents a situation which could be turned to a promoter's advantage, it does highlight that customers largely understand that these rules

apply. As shown, they may subvert them directly by asking, or even taking from behind the promoter's back. They may, as Rainer once said, even take the product by placing it into their trolley, taking the free gift, and leaving the product un-purchased at the checkout – but not the free gift. This rankled. During the process of promotion in the wholesalers, a member of shop staff brought him back a bottle of wine which had been left randomly on one of the shelves. Rainer seemed almost emotionally hurt, and the staff member likewise seemed to commiserate with his predicament. This is a further reiteration of the sense that promotion is a personalised process. And here, it is almost as if, having made themselves into the temporary consociates of the customers, they are now being let down by this rule-breaking – or at least, their generosity is being spurned through sides of transactions not being kept. Of course, it is important to note that it is not the generosity of the promoters at all which causes these promotional products to be produced and gifted. Rather, these products, as detailed above, are created, paid for and produced on order by the producing companies. However, just as the status of these items as gifts and commodities is ambiguous and multidimensionally fuzzy, the identity of the giver seems likewise ambiguous: Who does the promoter think is giving it? Who does the customer think is giving it? In the latter case, do they think about it at all, or care, as the promoters seem to do? It was nigh impossible to determine to whom the thanks were being given for the asparagus knives, whether this was to me, the company who made them, or an assemblage of the two, and if so, which proportions of both. However, from experience, and from a theoretical viewpoint, the promoters' view is much more interesting and its consequences very much more visible.

Eating alone: strategies of avoiding social isolation

Above, it was noted that Rainer feared that he was regarded as an '*Eigenbrötler*' by others. Although he meant it in a sense which refers to social outcasts and loners, the word's etymology is deeply symbolic when considered that promoters are working in places principally selling foodstuffs, and promoting them. The classic German reference-work, the *Duden* dictionary defines an *Eigenbrötler* as 'a person who detaches himself, who acquires his affairs for

himself and in his own way, and appears unusual to other people' (Drosdowski 1993:825). However, etymologically, this sense of isolated self-sufficiency is lexically linked with bread and the making thereof. The *Eigenbrötler* is literally an 'own-bread-er' and *Duden* suggests that it originally referred to bachelors who had to prepare their own sustenance, which, here, is baking bread (Drosdowski 1989:147). Commensality has long been regarded as an important generator of social relations. Yet, we are presented here with a term which highlights the outsiderness of an individual who, like self-employed persons today, makes their own living, and partakes of the fruits of that living *on their own*. In the Christian tradition bread is symbolically important, featuring in the Lord's Prayer ('give us this day our daily bread', Matthew 6:9) and in the sacrament of the Eucharist, where 'breaking bread' is an important part of the ceremony. However, for Rainer, it the Eucharist's other ingredient which he uses for the creation of sociality: wine. He also uses spirits and chocolate. Other promoters use, among other things, coffee, sausages, soft drinks, ice cream and biscuits. They share these with the other promoters. However these are not gifts from their own store cupboards, but the mass-gifts (in the form of samples) they are using to promote those very products.

During events such as those I attended, when there is a chance for promoters to work in the same location, rather than alone, breaks or lulls in customer streams give opportunities for promoters to move about and to talk to one another. A large part of these friendly and jovial interactions between promoters are marked by the provision of a small sample of the visitee's product to the visitor. More rarely, something will be brought by the visitor. This will be ongoing throughout the day. Despite this it must be emphasised that the idea, however, is not to provide the full nutrition for that day. Indeed, Rainer and I purchased food from the staff canteen on one occasion, and from a mobile catering van (present as part of the themed sales event) on another. In terms of beverages, however, when I purchased a glass of a fizzy soft drink for €1, Rainer seemed almost puzzled why I would do so when the presence of a promoter from such a company was present inside. When I questioned whether it was correct that I go simply go and ask, he was quite adamant it was. And later, a coffee promoter told me

to go and take my fresh cup and have Rainer fill it with some liqueur, which would enhance it no end! And other promoters came to me during my stint at the wine stand, and some even brought me slivers of cake, or ice cream, or sparkling wine, or biscuits. It is through this that promoters' needs for coffee, or sugary, energy-giving confections, or indeed a small sip of alcohol, will be met. These *Genussmittel* thus provide a small material *Genuss*, but this is transferred to the social.

During their rounds, promoters will get the chance to chat, catch up on events and to gossip. They may share experiences of other workplaces, how they were treated in a certain shop and tips may be given. Alongside the physical enjoyment, these mass-gifts-turned-gifts provide opportunity for sociality surrounding their being given, the act of giving itself, and the reactions of the giftee thereto may be noted. Thus there does exist some 'spirit' in these mass-gifts, and the spirit is very much social rather than just referring to something added to coffee! The lady who provided me with coffee during my first day shadowing Rainer, and the suggestion for the extra ingredient, remembered the number of cups I had received when I next met her almost three months later, for example. The most explicit expression of the use of mass-gifts to recreate normal social relations came at the beginning of one of the promotional events. In an impromptu fashion, the promoters near to the sparkling wine stand were invited by the promoter to come together with a thimble-sized plastic cup of that beverage, toasting to the day and wishing each other success.

That day was indeed to be a success for many, but for one promoter, the overstepping of the rules of mass-gifting brought about his disgrace. This rather more negative example centres upon a bottle of ketchup. And although it brought about failure for the promoter, there was a silver lining for me as ethnographer. This person, A, was present because Rainer and Rosi had been offered the chance to promote three products that day. In the circumstances, they had themselves commissioned someone to fulfil one of the spare commissions. A had been given a piece of sausage while one of his neighbours, B, a ketchup promoter was on a break. A desired

some ketchup for his sausage and opened a bottle of B's condiment, without permission, and without a sticker having yet been placed thereupon. B returned and was unhappy, and A offered to purchase the bottle. However, B later found a sticker on the bottle, surreptitiously placed there by A, and presumably obtained under dubious circumstances. B complained about A to the store manager, and A was asked to leave. Rainer asked me to fill A's place for the day.

This ketchup-based controversy was instructive for two main reasons. Firstly, it provided further evidence of the importance of these mass-gifts in the sociality of promoters. A month after the event happened, I was with Rainer on the first occasion he saw one of the promoters who had been present on the day A misappropriated the ketchup. The moral and legal errors by A were debated once again, and such discussions reveal the second domain in which it is instructive. The drama of the event meant that it had been discussed much on the day as well. It was generally regarded that A had been incorrect in his actions. A female promoter told Rainer that A had 'cocked things up' and should apologise. Likewise, the store manager had been correct to require him to depart, for this was theft, and against the law, and someone said the manager had 'had no choice – that's it'. However, A was felt to have stupidly overstepped the rules in two senses. First, he had taken an (unstickered) item without asking. Second, which made the situation much worse, was his misuse of the sticker itself. It is clear that once stickered, and therefore placed into the realm of gifts, an item can be gifted. However, the object still has commodity potential and mistaking which realm an item is currently (symbolically) inhabiting, which branch of Gregory's diagram it is currently appearing on, is highly problematic. However, this only highlights the ambiguity of the mass-gift, and the potential for misreading its value.

Why, as an outsider, did I feel it might be in some way illicit in asking for a glass of sparkling water? Is it because normally I am a customer, and it would be offered to me as someone who might actually purchase the product which it is linked to? However, in a real sense, as the

mass-gift is ambiguous, so is the promoter, for they are customers too and thus eligible to receive mass-gifts. They can buy at the end of their day's activities, or at another time. And what happens to the leftovers from the promotion? Are they gifts, and for whom? A great deal more time could be spent on debating the issue of the status of the mass-gift inside the world of promoters when viewed from the store's or company's perspective, however. What might a company think of this gifting? One of the promoters noted after the ketchup incident that she herself felt more under suspicion. For this chapter it suffices to highlight there is a certain tension involved in gifting between promoters. Promoters keep within a broad set of rules, but there is always a fine line between what is acceptable and what is not. The use of mass-gifts is allowed to wander slightly from their intended usage, sociality is created by promoters, and no difficulties arise as the work gets done. More importantly for this thesis, it shows that mass-gifts used in the correct way have rhetorical potential. Firstly, they create the sociality which allows the rhetoric to be used. And secondly, they take on a rhetorical quality themselves, in the sense that promoters can use them as tools for demonstrating their social ability, and thus have the necessary skills for promotion. This in turn makes other promoters aware that they are worthwhile knowing, and are recommendable as members of networks when spare commissions are available.

A question of resistance?

At the outset of this chapter it was stated that the task of the freelance product promoter is precarious and insecure. The benefits – literally – are low in that unemployment contributions and health insurance are not provided by companies whose products are promoted. It has been seen in many places in this thesis how eastern Germans have criticised the western capitalist system which has brought about such circumstances. Given their position, one in which they could be seen as 'oppressed', could this somewhat illicit use of mass-gifts be some form of resistance against their working conditions and the system which brought it about? The case of the taking of ketchup by promoter A is an explicit example which hints that there is a certain

sense of ownership over these mass-gifts. It might follow that re-appropriating the products of labour would be a viewed as positive, reaffirming, and eastern German, thing to do. And here, under the noses of the management of the producing companies and the host stores, could this be seen as a 'hidden transcript' (Scott 1990) where mass-gifts take on a hidden narrative used to subvert this domination and the mass-gift's 'public transcript' of giving to customers inside the capitalist commodity sphere?

In a very shallow sense, this might ring true. However, the situation is much more complex. Firstly, the exceptional case of the ketchup, and the reaction of B, and of the other promoters – even if the store management is not taken into account – largely nullifies this hypothesis. A was seen as no class hero. If anything, it suggests that there is a certain moral limit to this giving, and the exchanging of mass-gifts between promoters must not exceed these limits. Promoters agree that rules must be kept, whether this is related to their own social aesthetics or the law. There is, however, no choice. The job is done and havoc shunned. Secondly, promoters themselves are still engaged in promotion, and it was noted that Rainer and Marta enjoyed the task and wished to continue doing it.

On one occasion Rainer had recourse to discuss with another promoter his experience of poor service in a local supermarket. Agreeing that the manager of the store had treated Rainer in an unfair way, she said, critically, that many of these franchise-operating shop owner/managers were 'self-employed' yet 'did not understand the market economy'. The parallel between self-employed promoters and self-employed supermarket owners is striking, and instructive. It suggests that being capitalist itself is not seen as negative. Instead, what is negative is being unhelpful to customers, which is in stark contrast to what promoters must be. With this third point, doubts that promoters are anti-market economy are removed. However, I did find them critical of its excesses in much the same ways the self-employed people such as Ralf in Chapter 5 were. Marta, for example, criticised the lack of security in the modern *Bundesrepublik*, and

said that 'you cannot rely on the state' for one's needs, especially in a period of social or economic hardship. She went on that nowadays

> you have to make sure that you can manage the most serious things with as little money as possible. And that, I do not know, I don't find it in order. In GDR times we knew five is five, and six is six. That is not the case any more.

There is an echo of Engler's eastern German idiom here, and as he noted, it is accompanied by complaints about reduced caring and sociality. Talking about her schooldays she recounted that

> you knew how every person was, what intellectual level they had. […] The good ones helped the worse ones, [and] formed learning groups.

And this comment in the same vein, concerning the teachers, is noteworthy for yet another example of a *mit*-prefixed verb:

> every one got attention so that everyone came along [*mitkam*].

Rainer's recollections of the GDR are also heavily toned with a particular style of sociality, in that he highlights the fun he had in the FDJ, sporting activities within it and teaching in the factory. Indeed, his recounting of his working life after the *Wende* is similarly laden with the importance he places on enjoyment. Running the discotheque brought fun, working as a sales director in the international firm was fun, and when the circumstances which brought job reductions in that company coincided with the reduction of the social life and relaxed atmosphere due to new personnel, he then realised he should take his voluntary redundancy. Today, he suggested, fun with customers is one of the main benefits of his work. Rainer had been, however, both in the GDR and after, a manager with responsibility for multiple people. However, it was the on-going sociality that these various roles brought that was much more important for him than any power was:

> in the army when I began, you had your eleven men, then your thirty [men] for whom you were responsible. [...] In school, with pupils, as manager with your staff, during the GDR with your [factory] brigade, there was always some people who can react. "React" is perhaps the incorrect term, but you can work with

> them [*mitarbeiten*]. That was more fun for me, but what I do now, when I do it for myself, or for the two people who still work with me, or with Rosi, it is not so organisational.

It was noted in Chapter 3 that factories in the GDR were held to be GDR 'multiplexes' which had many social functions and where although 'work stood in the middle point, a society in miniature formed simultaneously around it like a corona' (Engler 2004:116; cf. Hübner 1994:180). In this vein, Berdahl describes the local suspender clip factory in Kella thus: 'Affectionately called the "gossip factory", it was a place where local folklore, stories, gossip, and even songs, were transmitted and transformed' (1999:187). Yet, Berdahl described how after its closure 'the loss of a worker identity inculcated through forty years of state ideology and physical labor' which 'contributed to many women's confusion and depression' (1999:193). Therefore, as seen, it was not only identity through work which was created, but the factory itself was seen as important place for sociality. Even if this was a GDR phenomenon, it was seen in Chapter 4 that this social aspect in workplaces is still presented as important in the east, when it was noted that this social aspect was evoked when Saxony's bakery king was presented in the *SUPERIllu* to temper the capitalist tone of new surrounding the expansion of his firm ([n.d.] 2008c). In this same way, the rhetorical power of the social factory can still have effect. Here, for the case of product promoters, the social nature of the second economy in the GDR is important. As Berdahl notes, before the *Wende*, 'social connections were the principle means of obtaining scarce consumer goods and services' and also 'central to the way in which social relations were organized during socialist rule' (Berdahl 1999:115).

During the GDR, as I was often told, there was no shortage of basic items, but luxury goods, among other things, were often unobtainable. In the book on growing up in Halle in the 1960s and 1970s (Bartholomäus and Küster 2008), the preparations for the *Jugendweihe* are described in material terms much more than about the ceremony itself. This excerpt shows the effort

which was required to gain the necessary commodities for the party accompanying it, and also the social relations behind it:

> Friends and relatives were tasked with – whenever possible – standing in line for smoked eel, ham, Hungarian salami, and Ur-Krostitzer beer. The leftovers from the various times it had been possible to get almonds, walnuts, hazelnuts, dried coconut flakes, raisins were saved up, and intelligence on delivery schedules of the import food shops in Große Ulrichstraße or in Neustadt was gathered in order to land some rare and equally sought-after goods such as tinned pineapple, peaches and mandarines. (Bartholomäus and Küster 2008:46)

And Rainer explained in great detail how his own social connections allowed him to exchange rare records, jeans and, indeed, commodities like coffee sent by western relatives. Further, his mother had worked in a supermarket, and they had ample access to the famous '*Bückwaren*' – 'goods for which the store clerk had to bend down' (Berdahl 1999:120) – such as bananas. Therefore in what has become known more widely in the state socialist economies as an 'economy of favours' (Ledeneva 1998; cf. Lovell et al. 2000 for more Russian examples), social connections were thus important in being able to exchange (both giving and obtaining) such items, and Berdahl notes that, 'referred to as "Vitamin B" for *Beziehungen*, connections to people with access to resources were more important than money' (Berdahl 1999:118). Therefore from this it can be taken that social connections were made through commodity exchange. Might this, alongside the idea that factories were places of great sociality, be of relevance in explaining the mass-gifting among promoters?

Although it must be noted that today the products which are the focus of promotion and mass-gifting are far from rare, there is, I suggest, some parallel in the process of mass-gifting by promoters in the east. Firstly, in terms of reciprocity, Berdahl was told by a woman in Kella that 'whenever people gave us a present of clothing, food, coffee – especially something from the west – I would always make sure to give them something in return. Even if they told me not to' (Berdahl 1999:119). This can be seen in the sharing of products for immediate consumption by the promoters which does more than merely evoke a sense of mutuality and reciprocity.

Rather, secondly, the promoters are persons with connections, in the sense that their task is representing the firms whose products they are promoting. Even if this is freelance, there is not merely a symbolic link. Instead, they have direct physical access to its wares for gifting. This functions inside the shop where each promoter is the exclusive representative of that firm, and thus able to gift its product to other promoters. It functions outside the shop too. Rainer used his connections with, for example, a company representative to obtain fine wines at a reduced price, and could order more than one bottle if someone else needed one. In addition, the promotional item mass-gifts, be they at times cheap, could also be expensive and exclusive (for example, the corkscrew). Their sense of exclusivity is augmented by being able to supply them for no charge. This functions not only for promoters, but for customers too who likely have the same view of the promoters and their items. Alongside the requests Rosi faced for pens etc. noted above, one couple in a different location could remember that the firm she was promoting that day once had very nice branded-glasses specially designed for drinking it in, and asked if any more would be offered in the future. To be sure, the phenomenon of using connections with firms is not limited to eastern Germany, but given the historical context it is particularly significant here. However, at the inter-promoter level, the practice of mass-gifting also recreates the sense of the GDR-era factory by invoking both its sociality, based on another sense of GDR sociality based on connections and gift exchange. Indeed, Rainer told me that the store staff in the western supermarkets seemed (pleasantly) surprised that he and Matthias were so generous to them with product samples. Further, Rainer apparently made a special point of saying goodbye greetings to all the permanent staff there at the end of the day. This was also regarded as unexpected, but certainly appreciated.

If, as it seems, this form of sociality created through mass-gifting is indeed a particularly eastern thing, it might also potentially be seen, by some, as an act of resistance against a new regime by continuing the social relations of the past while appropriating the mass-gifts of the capitalist commercial realm. However, rather than this representing resistance to a new form of working, given the general acceptance of the task and its being viewed as worthwhile, I prefer

the approach adopted by Gallinat (2005; 2002a, esp. 176-216) in her analysis of eastern German *Jugendweihe* ceremonies. Above, it was shown in the descriptions of preparations for the post-ceremony celebrations in Halle that, despite the official purpose of the ceremony as the making of socialist personalities, there was a concentration on material goods. In that book there was similar concentration on what gifts participants would receive. This was also seen in other books of that genre (Bartholomäus and Küster 2008; Bork 2007; Ludeck 2009) and also by Gallinat in her research. Further, she found ceremonies themselves could be participated in but not taken seriously, through, for example, entering ambiguity into the answers to ritual group questions by using regional accents to create double entendres. However, of critical importance given the potentially severe consequences of doing so, Gallinat highlights that 'from the viewpoint of the audience the group was therefore still engaging with the ideological vow' (2005:301). Given this state of affairs in which the transcripts are co-performed, in earshot of each other, and indeed for other reasons which highlight the complexity involved, Gallinat rejects the usefulness of Scott's concept, and its dichotomous differentiation. Instead, she prefers Lüdtke's sense of *Eigen-sinn* (1993). Noting that the term 'means literally "one's own will" but spiced with a healthy portion of thick-headedness', she regards this as a 'particular German concept relating to resistance' (2005:294). Lüdkte's conception of this German term is based on his analysis of factory workers before the First World War, and he highlights how rather than open resistance, the means of reacting to control factors from superiors in the workplace was much more nuanced.

As examples of this, against factory regulations, illicit breaks were taken and general physical horseplay occurred, with a particularly detailed example of painful 'moustache waxing', the rubbing of beards with greasy hands (1993:137-138)! However, this was a mutual, and benign, practice and no individual was particularly targeted above others. Close colleagues were spoken to *per Du* (Lüdtke 1993:141) and this sense of verbal and physical closeness was matched by solidarity. For example, workers would not steal each others' tools (as these were their own property, and also sole means of provisioning), but those made for sale as part of production

might be (Lüdtke 1993:142-143). In the factories of the GDR, for example, although under differing political situations, *Eigen-Sinn* as an analytical concept has been likewise used for analysis (e.g Lüdkte 1994; Reichel, in Lindenberger 1999, which itself contains wider examples for GDR society in various domains). As noted in Chapter 3, workers in the GDR were organised into collectives, and in particular the 'brigade' after the beginning of the 1960s (Roesler 1994). Despite this being intended to increase productivity Lüdtke (1994) suggests that they had to be encouraged to work harder, and were not particularly loyal to the state. Brigades which did perform well, and were politically active, were awarded the title '*Brigade der sozialistischen Arbeit*' ('brigade of socialistic work'), and the medal in Fig. 3.13 represents a later iteration of that award. Despite this, Hubner (1994:180-181) notes that in sum, brigades were generally less politically engaged than this, even if they were socially engaged in voluntary work etc. And even those brigades which had won the accolade tended to become less politically engaged once the award was made (Reichel 1999). Some even came under special observation by the authorities because of their demands for power in the workplace, and for holding of their own bank accounts outside the factories for social activities – the so-called 'syndicalism affair' of 1959-62 (Reichel 1999; Hübner 1994).

In place of syndicalism, the GDR had an official trades union body, the FDGB, and its 343,000 subunits of 20 workers each had its own elected, unpaid *Vertrauensmann*, similar to a shop steward (Hürtgen 2005:10). In a copy of the official handbook for such persons I obtained, although various sections have pages with underlined sections, only one has a paperclip attached for quick consultation, with its page number circled in two colours: this is the page concerning the rights of the *Vertrauensmann*, including being involved in decision-making (Graser and Kriegel 1985:13). Although such things should not be taken as evidence of widespread anarcho-syndicalist[32] tendencies in the GDR by any means, it does show that workers in the GDR, despite the lack of democracy at a political level, were not docile, agreeable automatons,

[32] The *Kleines Politisches Wörterbuch* treats syndicalism as being synonymous with anarchism (Schütz, Böhme et al:1978:894).

but had their own minds. Lindenberger suggests that 'to speak of "resistance" makes sense historically only if there is determined action directed against a dominating position' (Lindenberger 1999:21). Further, Gallinat suggests that '*Eigen-Sinn* can go only as far as it is meaningful for the individual' and 'if the difference between ideology and social reality become too great life-strategies are changed' (Gallinat 2002a:230). Here, in the factories during the GDR period, and before, those two conditions are not met. Rather, the workers are reacting against being pushed too far, and at the same time, wish to create a pleasant – and fun – working environment. The GDR example of the brigades encapsulates this well, in that the pushing for rights is to improve the working conditions, and the creation of an external bank account for the brigade is to organise and facilitate social events. It is not to openly overthrow Party and state authority. The same is the case in the stores where promoters come together.

Above it was mentioned that factory workers in pre-GDR times, when tools were owned by workers, would not steal them. However, pilfering of factory-produced tools made by them for further sale occurred. I argued above that the mass-gifts could be seen as surrogate self-made products by promoters. I cannot be sure what occurs to specially-stickered tasting products which are leftover at the end of the day, as it was Rainer's task to deal with these while I tidied up the stand. I did once hear a promoter say to another, 'well, *you'll* not need to buy [product they promote] anyway'. Whether this was a joke, or meant seriously, I could not tell. However, given the reaction to the case of Promoter A's mis-stickering of the ketchup, no doubt the moral code prevents any excessive pilfering of mass-gifting leftovers. In terms of horseplay and sociality, Figure 7.4 (overpage) shows two photographs which were taken during a totally customer-less lull on one quite customer-less day I shadowed Rainer. The first photograph shows me playing with the mass-gifted product, that is, with a bottle of wine in hand. The second, shows another promoter, whose buttocks have been carefully brought into the centre of the photograph by the photographer (another promoter). This was accompanied by greatly exaggerated gestures by him, showing attention to detail while composing it, to playfully annoy her. I was encouraged to pose for these photographs, which caused much hilarity, and they

were a diversion from what would have been a rather tedious and lonely time. It might be seen as rule-breaking, so could be seen as 'resistance'. However, there could have been customers about somewhere in view and thus was by no means a 'hidden transcript'. This is horseplay among colleagues, yet colleagues who are not official colleagues. However, like the sharing of mass-gifts, it is one way of creating pleasurable collegial sociality in a way which evokes the sense of *Eigen-Sinn* seen in GDR and pre-GDR workplaces, where such acts by workers were mutually, and therefore socially, condoned by their peers. Whereas, as a promoter there is a risk of becoming an asocial *Eigenbrötler*, here the appearance of *Eigen-Sinn* helps to return the social dimension to their working lives.

These examples considered here, and those of mass-gifting among promoters, are not acts which seek to overthrow. If anything, they are acts of those who want to remain inside the system, to continue doing what they do, and to render more pleasurable what might represent

Fig. 7.4

Eigen-Sinn at work: fun among product promoters

unpleasant working conditions made worse by contractual precariousness. They are examples of collegiality which have a deep resonance with long-practised worker sociality in Germany, both before, during, and seemingly after, the GDR period. In Austria, the expression used to wish someone a good meal is *'Mahlzeit!'*. Further, it is often used as a general greeting around lunchtime. When I used this in Germany (in the former sense) I was told by a middle-class person that it was socially unacceptable except among manual workers. Among the promoters, it was used in both senses, and Rainer wished it to full-time employees of the stores he promoted in. Rainer himself is not a manual worker, and never was. Indeed, neither were Rosi or Marta. However, all were employed inside factories in the GDR, and afterwards. The admonition I had received for saying *Mahlzeit!*, and Rainer's usage of it, made me consider at the time that there was almost a sense of the old *Kombinat* around these gatherings of promoters. These mealtimes were a poignant example of where the contractual and potentially social *Eigenbrötler* were given the chance to reject being *Eigenbrötler* in the literal sense: they could eat together. Whether this was by sharing mass-gifts, or in the store canteen, it was a nexus of sociality. And surrounding this nexus, and in other practices, when promoters had the chance to work together, despite their structural independence, they could symbolically create (or perhaps recreate) some sense of both sociality and worker identity. They can make sure they can – to the largest extent they can – be *miteinander* and not *ohneeinander* as per the complaint for the internet forum noted by Carrithers ([n.d.]).

Conclusion

In sum, these *Eigen-Sinn* practices are a further example of where a global assemblage is created. In the case of promotion – as it was in the case of self-employment in eastern Germany as suggested in Chapter 4 – where the eastern German idiom can nudge its way into the neoliberal practices, it will. However, once again, there is a tacit acceptance of these neoliberal structures, and indeed, pleasure gained from engaging in them as far as it does not impinge upon core eastern values expressed in the idiom. To conclude, an opportunity provided

by another example from Chapter 4, the course I attended in Hannover on becoming self-employed, provides further evidence of both the assemblage's existence, and of its fluidity and imprecision. It also shows how the social skills needed for promotion based on SRC can lead to success. The course coincided with a week when Rainer and Matthias had been given a commission by the Saxony-Anhalt Food Promotion Authority to take part in a campaign to promote their *Bundesland*'s products in Lower Saxony. This was part of a scheme in which a host of promoters from the region would visit supermarkets in various towns and villages. As one of the supermarkets Rainer and Matthias would promote in during the week-long commission was in relatively close proximity to my course's location, I promised Rainer I would visit them in that place. I think he thought this a joke because he was rather astounded – pleasantly astounded – when I appeared. I was able to spend a few hours in that place and in that time I witnessed how the men interacted with customers. To a large extent, as it was with the staff as I mentioned above, it was very much the way they would have in Halle.

There was much joviality, and customers seemed pleased to taste products from Saxony-Anhalt. Jokes could be made about eastern products during the GDR period by Rainer, but the current ones attracted positive comments from customers. Some people had been to the east on holiday, and stories about particular locations could be shared by Rainer and the customers. Rainer knew which cultural items to use, and likewise, which pleasant holiday memories to evoke in story-seed-rich narratives. Importantly, people bought items, and Rainer said that only one person had made disparaging comments about the east. The mode of promotion worked. In Chapter 3 I mentioned that the current Federal Republic is somewhere on a 'Wossi' scale to argue that it itself represents an assemblage of both eastern-ness and western-ness, as well as global aspects. Rainer and Matthias here were not fazed by westernness. They could deal with westerners, as they had done for years. They did not 'resist', but in an *Eigen-Sinn*-rich way, however, they still kept their positive eastern values in tow. They maintain a sense of sociality which highlights mutuality and consociality. Once again, in this chapter, it can be seen that such consociality is indeed expected of others. Once again I contend it is further evidence of the

eastern 'consociational personhood'. This consociational personhood is important to the people I have presented in this chapter, and they make good use of the skills the sociality pertaining to it offers. Rainer, Rosi, Marta and their (some-time) promoter colleagues make use of the opportunities that come by but remain firm in the belief that it is important to treat others with the correct amount of respect. They create persuasion, and persuade both customers and each other. In difficult times, they are self-employed, with the characteristics of the employed. They are independent workers, who can work as in a factory of old. Through so doing, these self-employed persuasion factories attempt to deal with the vicissitudes of life created by encroaching neo-liberal working models. With enough rhetorical and social ability, they will hopefully not need to call in the *Treuhand*.

PART

4

Citizens as civic salespersons

Back to Halle, and final conclusions

> Wandering attentively through the venerable old town of Halle, perched on the banks of the river Saale, one encounters the name Handel wherever one goes: he lends his name to streets, pharmacies, the conservatoire "Georg Friedrich Handel", the auditorium and naturally also the Handel Memorial, the Handel Block, which is currently under construction… not to mention the countless indications for the spiritual presence of the city's most famous son that one can only see at a second glance [sic]. (Zauft 2001:79)[33]

Introduction

In Chapter 3 I showed how Halle, and Saxony-Anhalt in general, have been regarded by residents and the wider German media as being a problematic place in terms of its economic and social situation. In light of high unemployment after the economic collapse of the post-GDR period and a shrinking population as a result, in the chapters which have followed I have presented how people in Halle become self-employed in order to provision for their financial needs. However, closing the narrative loop which began with Halle, in this chapter I show how a cultural item from the past, but from long before the state socialist period – based on a person – has been used most creatively to improve the image of the city of Halle itself. I will demonstrate how the city's authorities have made great efforts to use the name of its 'most

[33] This text contains a second part, featuring an abridged translation of the original German. Where English is available, quotations will be taken from it. When required, my translation will be used, and this noted.

Fig. 8.1

Orientation map of Halle's city centre, showing the places to be discussed during this chapter, namely the market square, and the train station and the pedestrian route between them. In this connection, the location of the Händelhaus museum is also shown.

famous son', composer Georg Friedric Händel, to dispel and banish a competing, problematic personification in the form of a 'Grey Diva' which represents its dark, run-down, depressing built environment. This occurs in various ways and at various levels, and I will further show how the authorities and individuals are at times in public disagreement over how this occurs. However once again, the rhetorical techniques which have been viewed in other situations, such as narrative and pronominalisation are visible in the people's efforts to improve the city, and in the debates over its image which occur in very lively debates. I also show how the people of Halle themselves use Händel, but as a further sign of their creativity and of a civic pride also use the image of the Diva. And beside these uses of individual characters to sell, once again it is possible to view the importance of the 'consociational personhood', visibly directed at not only customers but at the wider population of the city itself.

A very important person approaches

There was a great deal of excitement in Halle in late 2008 and early 2009 – at least according to the local edition of the *Bild* newspaper. Of course, 2009 was indeed a special year for Halle, given that the occasion of the 250th anniversary of the death of its 'most famous son' (Zauft 2001:79; Schümer 2009; Grashoff 2008:24) – composer Georg Friedrich Händel[34] – was seen as a most special occasion. However, the latest news was particularly exciting. One of the events laid on to mark this milestone was a special anniversary season of the annual *Händel-Festspiele*. This series of concerts has been held in June since 1952, and before that, sporadically since the first in 1922, including in 1932, when Händel's 250th birthday was celebrated. The 2009 gala season was preceded by the likewise festal reopening of the museum inside the house in which he was born, which had been specially restored. To mark the importance of the events, a very important person had been invited. As *Bild* announced on 15 September, that person – Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom – was not coming, but was sending a representative instead. As the 'exclusive!' headline noted, 'Prince Charles is coming to Halle!' (Wätzold 2008).

[34] I will use the German version of the name in this chapter.

Apparently, as the article notes, the (elected) mayoress had known for a quite a while already, and she said: 'the information came from Prince Charles personally'. Further articles followed, but in the end Charles did not actually attend the birthplace of the man who wrote the most famous parts of the music accompanying his future coronation. However, even the idea of him visiting Halle raised a problem. This was not related to Charles personally, but rather Charles' elevated status, and Halle's self-perceived sense of architectural degradation. To explain why this might be, it is necessary to view a series of maps and photographs.

Fig. 8.1 is a map of Halle which provides an overview of the location of various places, which are related to themes and incidents discussed throughout this chapter. It also shows a photograph of Halle's main market square. The square's central importance is reflected by its description as the 'city's business/visiting card' by a representative from the municipal city marketing organisation. The two buildings in that photograph which have spires are (from left to right), the *Marienkirche* church and the Roter Turm or, 'red tower'. Alongside these main Halle landmarks, near to the tower, the monument to Händel (Fig. 8.2) can be seen. The funds necessary to build this bronze statue were, as a plaque on its side reveals, provided by subscriptions from both German and English donors. This reflects Händel's own career in that although born in Halle, after leaving it at the age of eighteen, he made his fame at the Hanoverian royal court in Great Britain after that erstwhile German electoral house assumed the British throne. Music historian Lang notes that despite the city's provincial characteristics, 'Halle was an old seat of culture, and its church music was always on a high level' (Lang 1996:20). Händel had been a gifted child musician and had been in this church music scene, already composing (Zauft 2001:83), and having been appointed organist at the cathedral. Despite this, Lang suggests that, interested in secular music as well as the sacred, 'what Handel craved was the personal freedom to raise himself out of this provincial milieu to a life of culture' (1996:26).

Fig. 8.2

Händel statue on the main square in Halle

This he gained by taking the 'unexpected' step of leaving his secure employment in Halle and moving to Hamburg, without being appointed in advance. Becoming famous, he was appointed as court musician in Hannover. He went to London at the age of 25, despite remaining employed by Hannover, and became rich and wealthy. Queen Anne's death, and George I's succession to the throne, provided the coincidental 'delicate dilemma' for Händel, in that 'his employer, whom he had certainly slighted by ignoring the terms of his contract, now became the sovereign of the land in which he resided' (1996:132). Reconciliation followed and Händel wrote many famous works alongside the coronation service, including the celebrated *Water music* and *Messiah*. However, Händel's connections to Halle were not broken, and for example Lang notes that he returned there at times (Zauft 2001:85-88), including to perform (cf. Löffler and Tullner 1996:175-176), and when his former teacher died, that now 'famous London composer sent "frequent remittances" to his widow' (Lang 1996:12). This is mirrored in his final will and testament, which, along with the first two of four codicils, provided approximately

£2,000 for relatives and friends there (Deutsch 1974:691-92, 776, 784). And, as noted, after Händel's own death, other people's money – in the form of donations – also from the UK to Halle, added to money from Halle, allowed the statue to be built.

In this chapter I will demonstrate how Händel is very much still present in life in Halle. However, at this point, it suffices to note that his presence on the market square is very noticeable. His image, embodied in the statue which forms the main part of his memorial, sits directly in the centre of the square, beside one of the main tram interchange points. In many senses, the statue is the most important symbol of Händel in Halle and it is used for various purposes. Not only is it the place where people in my experience arrange to meet (cf. Wünsch 2008:41), but it is used symbolically by the city's administration. For example, when a new resident of the city, in compliance with the law, registers their address with the city council inside its main administration building which sits behind the statue on the square, they are given the folder shown in Fig. 8.3. The front of the brochure shows the Händel statue. Händel himself is shown to ask, 'my first residence is called Halle. What is yours?'. Inside the building, at the time I went to interview the entrepreneurship bureau section leader, as part of the 250th anniversary celebrations, schoolchildren had coloured in outline drawings of the statue, which had been hung around a *papier-mâché* version of the statue made by the town's youth workshop (visible in Fig. 8.4). For others, the statue is a place where Händel is solemnly remembered as the solitary rose left on its steps during the anniversary shows (Fig. 8.5) The importance of the monument meant that it was expected that Charles would visit it, as well as the Händelhaus. However, on his potential journey between the two he would have to meet another famous Halle person – or rather, a personification of Halle. This is the '*Graue Diva*' or the 'Grey Diva'.

The Diva in Grey and the Prince of Wales

Whereas it has been seen above that Halle has a troublesome reputation, its personification in form of the 'Grey Diva', the '*Graue Diva*', is also a problematic and difficult figure. The Diva

Fig. 8.3

Brochure folder received when registering as a new resident of Halle

Fig. 8.4

Replica of the Händel sculpture, surrounded by entries in a children's colouring-in competition

Fig. 8.5

Solitary rose at the foot of the Händel sculpture

image is a compound of many factors, and parts of the mixture originate in Halle's architecture. This is based somewhat on the reputation gained from the GDR-era concrete buildings, including Neustadt, Südstadt, Silberhöhe and the area around Riebeckplatz which I will mention later in this chapter. Combined with this is the GDR-era pollution The first trace I can find of the Diva is from a famous 1986 photographic exhibition by Helga Paris from Berlin.[35] After opening despite many issues over permits from the authorities, the exhibition contained not only images of the 'externally decrepit' grey buildings of 'a town at the end of the industrial age' as Wiesener notes, but also 'the pictures of the people in their urban environment clearly showed the signs of wear and time' (2004:63). In the exhibition catalogue, Helmut Brade, a celebrated graphic designer at the local art university (where it was noted I attended entrepreneurship classes), wrote the foreword and claimed that – in comparison to the style seen in Chapter 3 of the progress of Socialism and modernity in books on Halle – that it was a real image (Brade and Richter 1986; in Wiesener 2004:66). Further, he suggested that it might be time 'to gather the strength to [...] draw conclusions' about Halle's infrastructure and environment.

It is clear that improvements have been made in the meantime since the *Wende*, and Brade himself even whimsically notes in the recent new edition of a book of the photographs originally published in 1991 that 'she is not there any more, the Grey Diva. She is history' (Paris et al. 2006:6). The 'environment' section of the *Statistical yearbook 2008* notes that the 1990s allowed Halle to solve some of the problems

> which in the previous years had been largely brought it the reputation of a "Diva in Grey", reminiscent of the earlier major pollution of the Saale as consequence of the emissions of industrial effluents and the residues of pesticides from agricultural production. (Stadt Halle/Saale 2009:149)

In a further report, from the end of that named decade summarising the administration's progress, the personification is somewhat tortuously sustained by the mayor, who notes that the townspeople and administration may be proud 'when in 2000 the "Diva in Grey" can don

[35] The photographs in the exhibition are still published as Paris et al. (2006).

her attractive large-city dress' (Stadt Halle/Saale 2000:20). However, as I demonstrated at the beginning of Chapter 3, and will do further below, there is still much dilapidation in Halle's built environment.

I have written previously on the subject of derelict buildings in Halle and its surroundings (Hamilton 2010c) and it is important here to comment further on the perilous state of much of its housing stock. The use of 'perilous' is justified because streets were often shut due to buildings suddenly beginning to crumble quite unexpectedly, causing disruption to public transport, roadways and dangers to pedestrians from falling masonry. Fig. 8.6 shows some examples of derelict buildings, and a piece of stencil graffiti shown in the bottom photograph of the collection states explicitly that the building concerned is 'standing empty and deteriorating'. Analogue to some of these buildings, Fig. 8.7, shows the offices of the *Bundesland* monument protection office, which is itself covered in netting to prevent further damage and stands just off the eastern edge of market square. Although it refers only to those fit for habitation, it is noteworthy that Halle's housing stock had a surplus of 14.4% in 2008 (Stadt Halle/Saale 2009:71). It is also important to note that this had reduced from a 2001 figure of 19.1%. The *Statistical yearbook* suggests that this reduction came via concerted efforts and the demolition of buildings, especially in Silberhöhe and the western part of Neustadt, which were built in the GDR period from pre-set concrete. As Fig. 8.8, photographs of Neustadt, shows, the dereliction and these demolition efforts are quite noticeable when moving around such areas. These places are on the periphery of Halle, well outside of the city centre area shown on the map, and constructed to house chemical industry workers. As these industries shrank, the need for workers and houses for them did likewise. However, where *Charles* would walk is not one of peripheral areas. It is directly in the centre.

This juxtaposition of the renovated building alongside one in disrepair is very widespread in Halle. Fig. 8.10 shows one example of this. This point that Charles would now be scheduled to witness such things was one that was noted in Halle, by its town administration and the press.

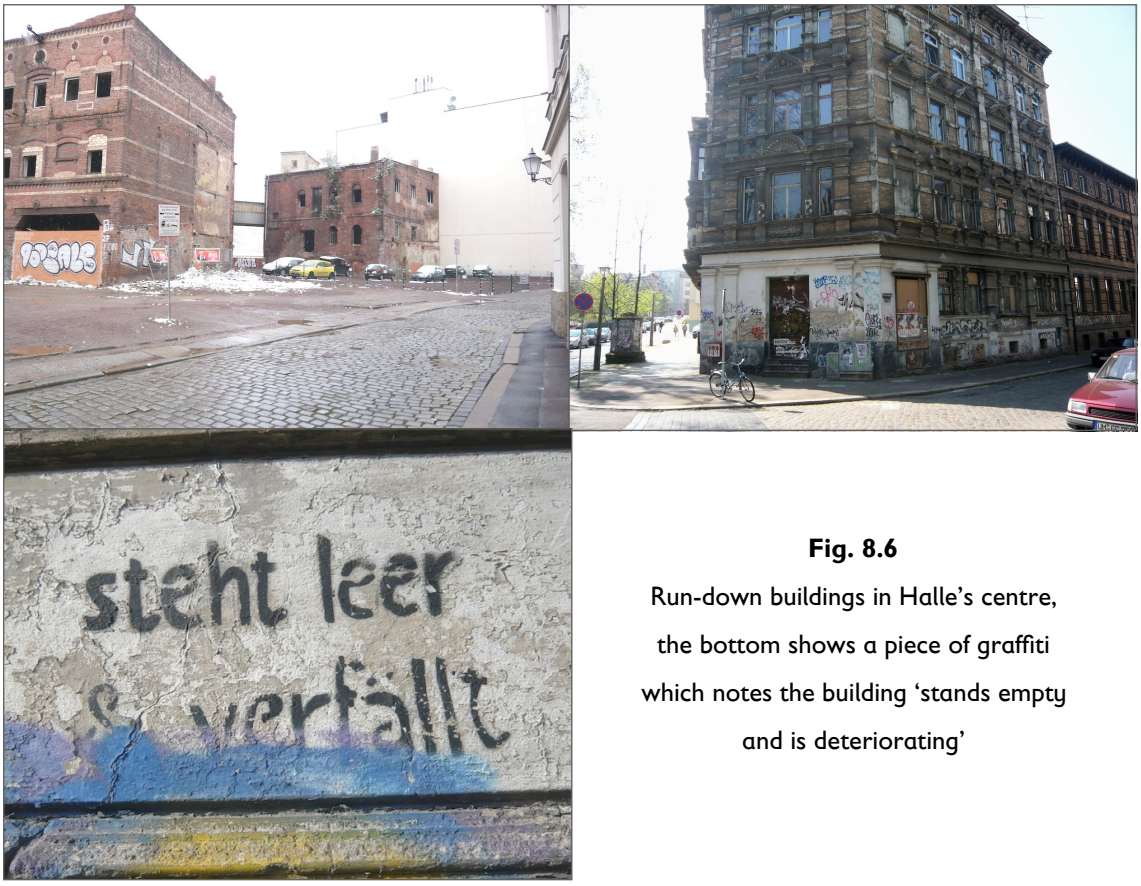

Fig. 8.6
Run-down buildings in Halle's centre, the bottom shows a piece of graffiti which notes the building 'stands empty and is deteriorating'

Fig. 8.7
Memorial protection office of the *Bundesland* government

Fig. 8.8

Buildings in Halle-Neustadt which have either been pulled down, or face demolition at some point

Fig. 8.9

Derelict buildings on the Gräsemarkt which Charles would have had to pass going from the market square to the Händelhaus

In the *Bild-Zeitung*, the unexpectedness of someone from outside happening upon such scenes meant that the area between the Händelhaus and the market square would require some measures to be taken 'so that Charles will not be in for a shock' and 'wonder where he has landed'. The article, entitled 'All ruins gone before the Händel festival!', which appeared six months before the *Festspiele,* went on to announce that the city council had €4.6M set aside to aid owners with the necessary renovations, but that not enough time was available. However, they believed that something should at least be started. Comparing these repercussions to the GDR-era practice of painting over ruins in Leipzig before the annual fairs, the newspaper's comments were critical:

> Basically it means this: The '*Bruchbuden*' ['dumps', or 'ramshackle buildings'] should if-you-please disappear behind construction tarpaulins. Rather than a "masterplan" it sounds more like Potemkin villages.

This image of Potemkin villages reappeared, in the newspaper two months later (U. Freitag 2009c). It was, at this point, however, to note that there would now not be sufficient time to organise the construction work which the tarpaulins would be there for. Rather, the town marketing office had decided to institute a new plan. One idea as a quicker and cheaper

Fig. 8.10
Juxtaposition of renovated buildings beside those at risk of collapse

temporary option for the most derelict building in Fig. 8.9 was to install a ghost-based light installation. In the same spirit, for the others, advertising, still on tarpaulins, would be used instead. It was noted in Chapter 6 that advertising is one of the most explicit forms of persuasion. Later in this chapter I will show how, rather than acting as Potemkin villages, the advertising used is particularly interesting for the various ways this persuasion it contains is used. Through interviews with those involved, those who helped organise the advertising, and those who appear on it, I will show how persons remain important in commerce in Halle. This leads further onto the importance of using people as objects in that selling process. Given the importance of one particular person, in his anniversary year, I will show how Händel himself is used by the self-employed in the city. Further, I suggest this casts light on the city itself and its status as a business location. This will show how the rhetoric of personhood is central in this regard. But as the city's most famous historical person, attention must be returned to Händel in order to do so.

Händel in the centre point

As Halle's 'most famous son', as noted above, Händel is very much visible in Halle, be it the form of buildings, street names, and buildings named after him. There are also a great number of visual representations. As seen above, these include his image in the form of paintings, and reproductions of paintings. The most striking visual, and dominant, representation of Händel is in the form of his statue. Part of this domination is not merely physical by dint of being in the centre of the market place. Indeed, as viewed above, he can be seen in many second-level representations of the statue, in photographs and other artistic representations including plastic (in the artistic sense) reproductions of the statue. Fig. 8.11 (overpage) shows a particularly intense concentration of these many forms, in a pastel pavement-art reproduction of a painting of Händel, which was located beside the Händel monument, itself also a representation of Händel. Further, commercial uses abound as Fig. 8.12 (overpage) shows.

Fig. 8.11

Händel beside Händel during Händel

Fig. 8.13, a sticker produced by the supporters of the local football club, shows Händel wearing the team scarf. In their *No caption needed* (2007), Hariman and Lucaites discuss how photographs, and especially those taken for photojournalism purposes, become 'icons' in public culture which are reproduced, reused and, as the book's title alludes, very recognisable in that use. Their conception of icons is germane to a rhetoric cultural analysis given its concentration of the persuasive character they view in such photographs. In this vein, they define an iconic photograph as 'an aesthetically familiar form of civic performance coordinating an array of semiotic transcriptions that project an emotional scenario to manage a basic contradiction or

Fig. 8.12

Various commercial uses of the image of Händel: a perfumers, an out-of-town furniture chain's opening, the Halloren's chocolate Händel advertising 'Händel-Pralinen', and a music and bookshop

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Fig. 8.13

Town's league football club fan sticker showing Händel wearing supporters' scarf

current crisis' (2007:29). Using examples such as Joe Rosenthal's 'iconic' photograph of marines raising a US flag on Iwo Jima in 1945, they show how these icons are reproduced firstly in print, and then may later be taken up, then reproduced in other forms, manipulated or parodied for various rhetorical purposes. In the case of the Iwo Jima flag-raising image, they show how it became symbolic of World War II, used to raise funds, in advertising for companies, and no less to parody contemporary politicians among many other things.

In many senses, from a merely aesthetical point of view, there is a certain similarity between iconic photographs and statues, and this point is made explicitly by Hariman and Lucaites. They also (among other examples) ascribe the potential for iconicty to statues, suggesting they represent an earlier form of iconic image with the same potential for reuse and reinterpretation. Indeed, they explicitly invite the reader to:

> think of a statue in a town square […] probably erected many generations ago, […] praised by some and probably faulted by others for its more or less successful embodiment of civic ideals. It served to create an image of the model citizen in order to define a public space, and with that, a democratic polity. (Hariman and Lucaites 2007:25)

Fig. 8.14
(a) Mozart in Salzburg with his balls, (b) Luther in Lutherstadt Wittenberg, where his mass-production biscuits (not included, and an anachronistic invention) are made

However, if this statue 'is certainly overlooked today, left to pigeons and distracted children on school trips' (ibid.), then the Händel statue in Halle is more akin to the example of the Statue of Liberty in Zerilli's (2000) analysis, which they also make reference to. Zerilli shows how the Statue came to embody US ideas of nationhood, despite initially representing a 'gift no one wanted' (2000:171) from France and only championed by enthusiasts. It only became the symbolic 'national thing' (2000:177) through time. Further, throughout its history the Statue of Liberty could be appropriated, re-appropriated, remoulded and reinterpreted in many rhetorical ways for various public political ends, from female suffrage, to anti-immigrant movements and Regan-era small-government-imbued initiatives. As relatively few persons can actually see the statue when these rhetorical actions take place, the statue is reproduced – just as the iconic photographs – in mediated forms, such as magazines, newspaper or television and also in replicas of the statue itself which can be sold. Like Liberty, from what has been seen above, if it is the case as Hariman and Lucaites suggest that such 'copying, imitating, satirizing, and other forms of appropriation are a crucial sign of iconicity' (2007:37), then Händel has such a function in Halle. However, there is an important qualification to be made. Hariman and Lucaites make specific reference to Warner's (2002) conception of publics and that 'the public exists largely by virtue of being addressed as a public' (Hariman and Lucaites 2007:26). The public created by the statue, for after all it is a medium as much as a magazine albeit with a civic function, must be taken into consideration.

Those persons who live in Halle, or work in it, and move by the market square are being addressed by the statue over time. Through a building up of familiarity, which may also come through discussion of the statue directly with consociates, or in other mediated forms, the statue becomes an icon which does not need a caption when doing rhetorical work. In Fig. 8.3, the brochure given to new residents of Halle, with Händel on the cover, suggests that knowing the statue is one of the first things that person will do in the process of becoming a citizen of their new city. This highlights once again that Händel is regarded, at least officially, as one of the central icons of the city, with the statue one of its main embodiments. This phenomenon of

cities linking themselves to famous inhabitants is not rare, especially in Germany or Austria. For an example of a composer, in Salzburg, Mozart can be encountered regularly, in various guises, as Fig. 8.14 shows. It also shows Luther in Wittenberg, north of Halle. It was there where he is alleged to have pinned his *49 Theses* to the door of the Schloßkirche church. Halle shares the Martin Luther University with Wittenberg, and this tradition of naming universities in Germany and Austria after famous persons is very common. However, Wittenberg (along with Eisenstadt and Mansfeld, also near Halle) officially 'caption' themselves as '*Lutherstadt*' ('Luther-town/city'). Therefore the official name of Wittenberg – Lutherstadt Wittenberg – is the one which appears on official forms and on the running-in boards on platforms at the main line train station. If my fieldwork in Halle had ended three months earlier, I could have said that no similar efforts were visible there. I had never heard the name '*Händelstadt*' being used. However, in a 2001 book I purchased at the time of the *Festspiele,* by Dr Karin Zauft, musicologist and Händel expert, president of the Händel society and holder of the Händel prize (given by the city for those who honour his work) claims otherwise. Suggesting that Halle is a '*Händelstadt*', she claims that the name has been used by members of the city's Händel movement – one of which she seems to be – 'as a particular sign of the old city on the Saale, pregnant with history and culture' (Zauft 2001:10, my trans.). They have made efforts 'whose results made it only correct and justified that Händel's birthplace could be called a Handel-city' (ibid.). Further, she claims that 'the justified attempts by music enthusiasts and local patriots to decorate the image of their city with this honourable name are not restricted to modern times' (Zauft 2001:79). As evidence she quotes a local newspaper from 1901, in which Halle is called the '*Händelstadt*' (2001:9).[36]

[36] She does at this point admit that the article noted Halle was not particularly involved in external movements to reawaken interest in his music, and was written to help rectify this situation.

Halle's grand relaunch

Even if Halle as a city of Händel had been unavoidable, Halle as a titular 'Händel-city' might have passed me by unnoticed. However in 2009, towards the end of my fieldwork in Halle, Stadtmarketing Halle, the town marketing department, decided to 'caption' Halle in the process of providing it with a new corporate identity. Although it would not be an official, charter-based name change like Wittenberg's, for marketing purposes at least, Halle would now be '*Halle Saale – Händelstadt*'. Or rather, it would be 'hallesaale / HÄNDELSTADT' in the official typography, as can be seen in Fig. 8.15 which shows the logotype as it appeared on a postcard distributed as part of a launch awareness campaign. This corporate identity was taken on by the city council in its official functions. Halle still maintains its heraldic grant of arms, which is a corporate seal of its sovereignty in official matters and, as a state symbol may be only officially used by it or its agents – and forms part of the decoration of this thesis! However, the city's new logotype will also be used for marketing purposes. Until that point in my fieldwork, the previous corporate identity from 1990, had been in use. This consisted of the name Halle, followed by a variety of names, including '*-stadt*' formations when necessary. For example, the business card of the leader of the city's entrepreneurship bureau referred to in Chapter 4 bore the form '*HALLE – Die Oberbürgermeisterin*' ('HALLE – The Mayoress'), as did parking tickets, because these were in her administrative domain. However, the default, and main version was '*HALLE – Die Stadt*' ('HALLE – The city'), as can be viewed in Fig. 8.16.

Co-incidentally, I had been attempting to arrange an interview with Stadtmarketing for many months, to no avail – or response. Eventually, and in the end fortuitously, when it did occur, it was merely a few weeks after the new corporate identity relaunch. During the good-natured interview I asked the representative from Stadtmarketing why, in the previous few weeks, Halle had become exclusively in marketing and corporate terms a *Händelstadt*. He countered that it had always actually been one, but from a marketing point of view, it was time to highlight it. He said that the old logo in use since 1990 with Halle as 'the city' was 'a

nonsense distinguishing feature' and deliberately vague as it had so many functions to cover. For the new campaign, the original brief for the tendering process had been for something which could 'unify knowledge and culture in one logo and one cultural identity'. The similarity between this and the particular aspects focused on by Zauft in her description of what associating Halle with Händel would bring, i.e. making it seem 'pregnant with history and culture', is clear. Indeed, such attributes are positive to be linked to. However, the new version which had been chosen – *Händelstadt* – had the benefit of using one main identity for these purposes simultaneously. Firstly it was an *Alleinstellungsmerkmal*, or 'unique selling point' for Halle, as a place which has this connection as a mark of its individuality, and exclusivity. Secondly, the concept of Halle as a *Händelstadt* was one which could have effect both 'outwards' and 'inwards' while fulfilling these other functions. For an external audience, it had touristic value and could be used 'regionally, nationally and internationally' given Händel's fame. For an internal audience, Halle's residents, it would be the 'lowest common denominator' – used by the representative in a positive sense – as something everyone from the town could identify with in one phrase.

It is significant that Händel's uniqueness, or perhaps Händel as a mark of uniqueness is what is felt to be something to sell Halle both inwards and outwards. In the marketing workshops I attended one of the most often heard phrases was *Alleinstellungsmerkmal*, or quite often the original English term 'USP' – unique selling proposition/point. In Chapter 4 I referred to the 'elevator method', taught in one of those courses, which was seen as a way of 'selling yourself' in business. Using it, the businessperson would learn to tell what their personal narrative, including USP, was in a time period of thirty seconds. This mirrors the time spent with someone in such a conveyance. If this is something which embodied Martin's conception of mini-corporations and using and managing personal characteristics to succeed, then *Händelstadt* is a very concentrated example. If, as the representative from Stadtmarketing told me, this logo could be placed on firms' letterheads, or banners taken to sporting events outside Halle, etc., then the time in which this epithet could fill someone's attention is much shorter and must be

Fig. 8.15

Halle as Händel-town: the new corporate logotype. In basic form it consists of the text 'hallesaale', the star above it, and 'HÄNDELSTADT'. The star is also supposed to be asterisk, pointing to a footnote, 'Welcome!', below.

Fig. 8.16

'HALLE * The City': The pre-mid-2009 municipal corporate identity

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Fig. 8.17

HalleForum.de logo

Source: http://www.halleforum.de/static.php?p=Ueber_uns

able to do much more rhetorical work in that time. For if an elevator ride takes thirty seconds, a slogan like *Händelstadt* takes only one tenth of that to utter or read at most. It is designed with this in mind, and from an SRC point of view, a particularly strong story seed. It is designed as rhetorically efficient with this in mind, and to be, as the 'common denominator', the story seed with maximum narrative potential for the largest number of people inside various publics. However, inside Halle, this potential was used with a hearty dose of *Eigen-Sinn*. Various ironies were highlighted and criticised, and even the very idea of Händel as USP was questioned. This is not to say that Händel himself was attacked – far from it as evidence shows – but it does highlight the ambiguities of employing such a character as a USP raises.

Although I have already highlighted the issue of Händel as USP, much of the criticism of the new corporate design was in its implementation and its form. Stefan Voß, the head of Stadtmarketing (and not the person I interviewed) had to apologise to the town council for various issues, such as acting before official sanction was given, as noted in the *Bild* (U. Freitag 2009g). At another point he had to suggest a separate version, with coat of arms for official use only (U. Freitag 2009f), which does not seem to have been done at the time of writing. Helmut Brade, still professor at the art university, was particularly critical and in an open hand-written letter to the mayoress called the logo 'squalid' and 'a run-of-the-mill solution which at best suggests a city of modern buildings' (U. Freitag 2009d). Further, his criticism recalled the polluted Halle of the GDR period, with the colours of the logo 'reminiscent of the grey (dirty) Saale and the red past'. This recalls the Diva somewhat, which it was noted earlier Brade claimed to have become part of 'history'. However others' complaints focused on different matters. The HalleForum.de website posts news articles about the town, and then allows comments to be made on the news, as was noted in Chapter 3 when considering peoples' attitudes to the shrinking of population. The logo also provoked comment.

The editors of the website HalleForum.de, as well as many contributors to its comment fora, were angered by the similarities between its own long-established logo, and the new corporate

design. From Fig. 8.17, it is perhaps understandable why accusations of plagiarism were one of the main criticisms found in the longest of the discussions on the new corporate design. The Stadtmarketing representative, aware of the criticism, told me categorically the HalleForum.de allegations were untrue. If anything, he was pleased that it had gained attention. However, there were complaints of a different nature. The design itself was criticised as trying to be 'offbeat' and 'cool', and merely examples of the latest marketing frippery. One poster, 'alterScheeks', said he or she always tried to promote Halle when travelling, but even in Germany it was not well known. In their opinion, the lower-case style of the new logo would not help because people would not associate these words with anything and they advised, 'in all seriousness, give up this rubbish as soon as possible!'. This is not to say that some contributors were not positive about the new logo. In the longest of the discussion threads, one commenter 'Cowboy' was pleased that a USP for Halle had finally been thought of ([n.d.] 2009–-b). 'EinsZweiDrei' thought that the only good part of the logo was the *Händelstadt* part. However, 'alterScheeks' noted that on a recent trip to France, that almost every town in Germany he passed through had a name added to it of the type 'Whateversville – Fripperytown'. They said this was part of ongoing inflation of such practices in Germany and thus Händel, (through what might be termed here conceptual repetition) would not be a USP at all.

It would be unfair to Halle to suggest Händel had nothing to do with the city once he left. However, the sheer output and level of fame which the composer had while in London, and the sense that Händel's links with Halle might therefore be somewhat overstated by this latest Stadtmarketing campaign – as one poster, 'ayo' asked:

> Just what exactly is a Händel-city? Is *Schorsch* (George) still alive, or we in his mind? Should London get a name affix before they miss out? They don't need it, so why do we? ;) It is not any more imaginative than the old affixes.

This unusual orthography ('*Schorsch*') aims to render the German pronunciation of sounds which exist in English, but not in standard High German. Here, the English /dʒ/ as initial and final phonemes of the English 'George' is replaced by /ʃ/ (for 'sch') as a German would when

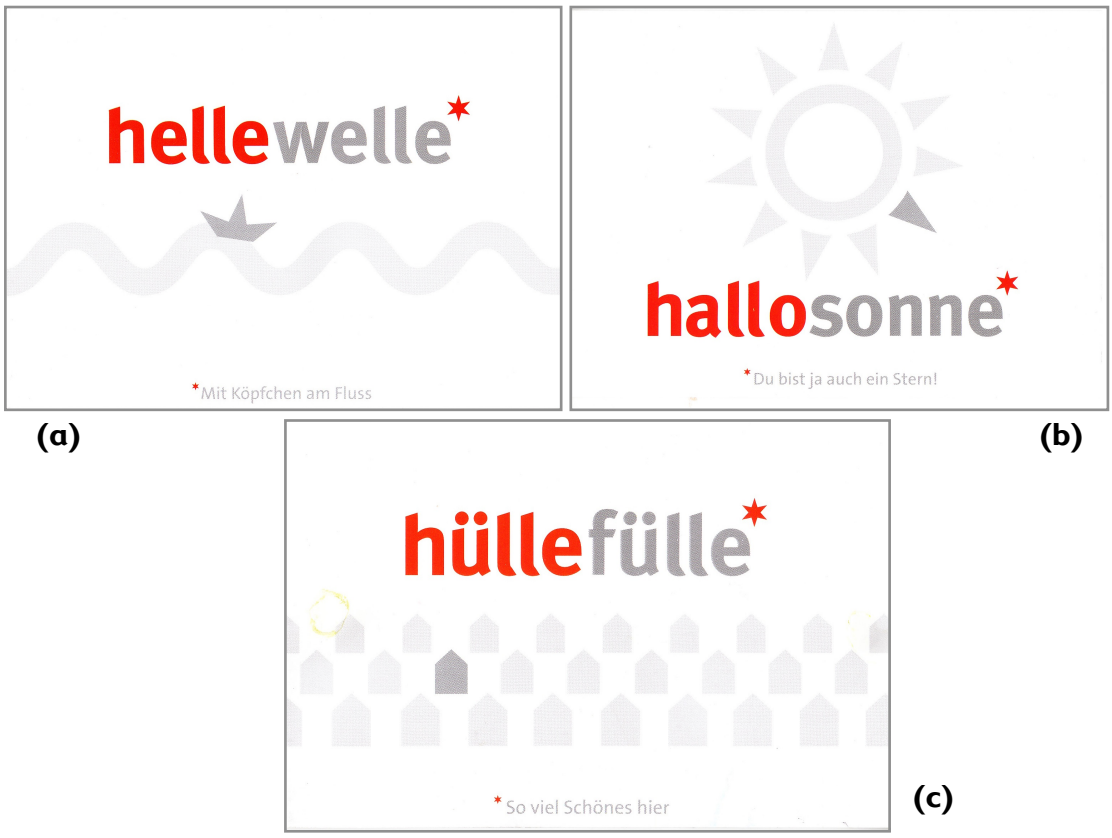


Fig. 8.18

Advertising postcards alluding to the words 'Halle' and 'Saale' as in the new corporate logotype. From top-left, (a) 'bright wave, (b) 'hello sun' and (c) 'enough to spare'.

attempting to pronounce these standard English sounds which are non-standard in German. This is in comparison to the /g/ pronunciation of 'G' in German which would appear if the German name 'Georg' was being uttered. In a fit of *Eigen-Sinnig* playfulness, Händel has been rendered British as he did indeed legally become.

Other acts of *Eigen-Sinn* by forum posters were much more visually elaborate. Some made bootleg versions of the advertising campaigns used to launch the new corporate design. Fig. 8.18 shows the postcards used, in which the name of the town is playfully changed to give positive messages suggesting cultural plenty, natural and architectural beauty and optimism. The posters change these, as can be see in Fig. 8.19, for their own satirical purposes. A postcard which once mentioned 'a container of plenty' now refers to a container full of liquid manure. And instead of a *Händelstadt*, the name affix becomes in one case 'poor town' on a

mock up of a parking ticket begging for money. In another, the affix is changed to 'Iwantoutofhere'. This is, of course, where Händel's name normally goes. However, whether it is Händel or the poster themselves who wishes to leave, it must be noted that Händel himself did actually go. This is a particularly striking point given the question of emigration from Halle, as noted in Chapter 3 has long been a concern for the city's administration, as it has across eastern Germany. Many others have gone since Händel, and especially in the comparatively short period between 1990 and the time of making the mock logo. However, here, on that very HalleForum.de website, where emigration from the city was discussed in such passionate terms an explicit link is made between the irony of its advertising policy being based on someone who is doing what the town has been trying to avoid.

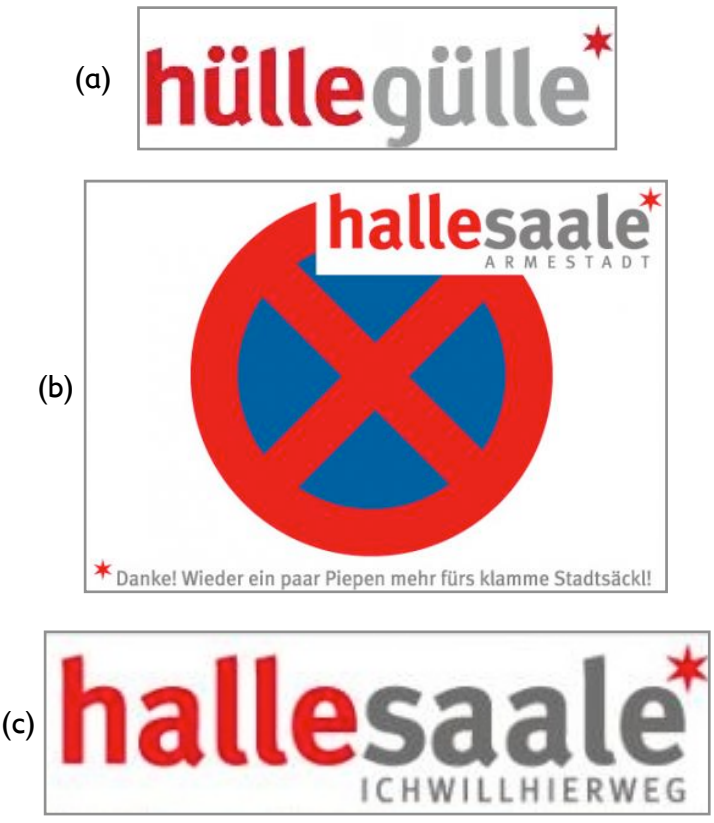


Fig. 8.19

Bootleg versions of the logo on HalleForum.de: (a) 'container of liquid manure', (b) 'hallesaale* POORTOWN', (c) ' hallesaale* I WANT OUT OF HERE'

Händel's rival?

It is worthwhile reconsidering Charles' supposed journey from market square to Händelhaus from an SRC point of view. As noted, the journey is short, on foot, there is time to think. If a tourist, or a group thereof, walked along that route, they would begin with the statue. They meet the person of Händel, whom they now recognise more than ever through the new naming policy and logo as being Halle's main feature. If the journey is considered as a narrative space, which other characters, or cultural items, might enter the discussion, or narrative, by dint of being viewed? Visually, fallen buildings around the Gräsemarkt are extremely noticable, and arresting. A tourist will likely have heard the stories of 'East Germany', or the '*Ossis*', the desolate landscapes where blossoming was once to occur. These cultural items need to be rendered less potentially active, as is the intention inherently behind the advertising tarpaulin plan. However, there is another character lurking in amongst these buildings which are targeted for covering up, and who this somewhat represents. This is an embodiment of the familiar 'Grey Diva'. The Grey Diva is not the ghost planned to feature as the light show in the house most in need of repair. However, she is still there in a physical sense in the decrepit buildings. It would not be accurate to say that there is no acceptance of the Diva image whatsoever. Indeed, today, the city offers architectural walking tours based on the 'Diva in Grey' ([n.d.] 2008g). However, it appears there is still, rhetorically, a need to persuade the citizens that they must counteract the shadow of this 'Diva'.

An example of this call to counteract the Diva and the negative reputation, where it is explicitly stated, is in an editorial in the *Mitteldeutsche Zeitung* on 20 June 2008. The author claims that the arrival of a large theatrical festival is cause for celebration. However, the picture is more complex:

> It is a further sign of life which should provide an impulse much longer than the duration of the festival: Halle, which still must fight against the misunderstood label "Diva in Grey" and who likes to talk itself down, is gaining in self-assurance.

> Whether it is a diva or not, remains to be seen: in any case, the greyness above all nests in a cherished despondency. (Montag 2008)

This linking of the people of Halle to a certain grey, miserableness is not uncommon in my experience when talking to residents. Naturally, they accuse other people of engaging in such negativity but not themselves, and express that this nebulous attitude must be expunged. During my interview, for example, with the Stadtmarketing representative, this was mentioned:

> Aha! This is this self-perception of the Hallenser – which always presses themselves down. This east German mentality of reticence, the insecurity.

It is interesting to note here that the idea of reticence can be both positive in the east as well as negative. Ingeborg the lawyer could praise easterners for their reticence, yet that reticence is one of avoiding overselling. What can be viewed here is criticism of reticence where it can be understood as overly-negative underselling. The advertising bureau representative linked this negativity not only to self-perception, but also to a perception which is focused onto Halle itself as well. The representative went on to suggest that people from outside, after having lived in Halle, are much more positive about the city than those born there. Thus, they suggested, Stadtmarketing must tailor their internal marketing activities to account for this municipal-focused inward reticence and posited that

> it would be nonsense to put on the posters "Halle is super!". We need to show that Halle is super, but more subtly and less directly.

Händel abroad – the consocial entrepreneur

Halle is not the only location where a 'Händel house' is located. The visitor to London can visit another museum which bears this name. Like the original house's location close to Halle's market square, this is found not particularly far from the main commercial hub of Oxford Street. The house where he lived, composed and ended his life, in Brook St, now hosts the Handel House Museum. Another site of Händel's activity in London is found beside Coram's Fields. It is the former headquarters, and only remaining original building, of the Foundling

Hospital built by Coram, where his good works resulted led to a special exhibition in 2009, at the same time as the celebrations in Halle, called 'Handel the Philanthropist' (Hogg et al. 2009a). A panel on the top floor of the museum's permanent collection describes him in a significant way – as 'entrepreneur and philanthropist'. In many senses, Händel represents, in his clever business developments, the typical view of the entrepreneur as hero and icon which Villette and Vuillermot criticise as 'predatory' (2009). In Chapter 4, it was seen how eastern Germans entrepreneurs are represented in mediated form in *SUPERIllu* magazine, and in interviews or training courses. I argued in that chapter that, despite a tacit acceptance of the need to become involved in capitalist activities, there was a need for this to be tempered by social-based acts. In Chapter 5 I showed how this sense of caring for others' needs is indeed valued by eastern German businesspersons. This was further viewed in Chapters 6 and 7, where product promoters were seen to need to excel to survive in a cut-throat business world, but likewise valued such social values. Here, the example of Händel provides someone who was likewise operating in a competitive environment of musicians, was now 'enjoying prosperity after a period of financial uncertainty' (Hogg et al. 2009b:4), and, just as Saxony's bakery king gave much to charity, decided to provide some of his wealth for the good of others. However, the picture is not quite so simplistic, for there is another more problematic parallel which has already been alluded to above and is striking.

To a large extent, what has been seen in this chapter so far has largely been a set of contemporary answers to a question which I posed at the beginning of Chapter 3 –how to describe a town. The answers seen in this chapter mirror some of the answers seen at that point: the narrative of decline is condensed into the *Eigen-Sinnig* epithet of a '*Armestadt*' ('poor-town') which one wishes to escape from. 'Händel-town' is another, but one which tries to counter a negative description. A further example can be found in a different configuration of the old city logo which I found on a brochure advertising the services of the entrepreneurship bureau which I referred to in Chapter 4. Visible in Fig. 8.20, it describes Halle as a 'city for startups'. The preposition is interesting. Is it a city for them, or of them, or with them? The

new logo with Händel shows someone for whom it was not a place where his entrepreneurial activities could be carried out. Thus, Händel was an emigrant. And while he did not necessarily go for the same precise reasons as they, he does fit into the pattern which has been regarded as problematic since the *Wende*. This is the shrinking of the population, as young people, move to other places, especially in the old *Bundesländer*, the 'great trek towards the west' (Kröhnert et al. 2006:44) which was noted in Chapter 3 to have affected the city, as it has other parts of eastern Germany. In that chapter I noted the discussions on the HalleForum.de site about this movement, and leaving to gain chances was approved, while going to make oneself wealthy was not. Those who stay and help to improve the city were praised, although the task was recognised for its potential difficulty in such circumstances. One poster claimed that:

> Whether someone gains a foothold in Halle depends mostly on themselves. Whoever gets involved, has ideas and doesn't think too statically, can also have a life in prosperity in Halle. ([n.d.] 2007–)

Although it may be the case that Händel may have gone away to gain his prosperity, in keeping with his generous disposition, he himself represents a 'gift which keeps on giving'. This is not only for the town's administration in their logo, or musically. Rather, for those persons who 'get involved', 'have ideas' and also 'don't think too statically', Händel's fame can also be used to allow them to attempt 'to have a life in prosperity in Halle'. For just as the town may use his image to promote itself, there are certain aspects which lend itself to use by the self-employed as well. To discover one example of how this occurs, another walk along a different problematic, yet equally important, street is required. On this walk, before discovering how individual businesspeople do so, it is also possible to view how the municipality itself uses those persons to 'sell' the town as well. It will be shown how the focus on people and their consocial skills and abilities is once again to the forefront in these processes. It will be seen that Halle is not just a town 'for' start-ups and the self-employed, but one in which those persons become very visibly linked to it. It will also become more clear that, through innovative use of cultural

Fig. 8.20
The old logo showing Halle as 'city for those starting up a business'

items, narratives and metaphors, these self-employed people use their city itself as a selling point, despite its negative reputation, to allow it to be described in a more positive light.

Boulevard of divas and icons

Leipziger Strasse, if arriving in Halle by rail, is likely to be the first main street taken by the visitor to the city. Pedestrianised, it links the railway station and the market square and Fig. 8.21 shows the street in relation to both. Leipziger Strasse's importance as a main thoroughfare and shopping street is represented in its nickname, 'the Boulevard'. As can be viewed from Fig. 8.21, the street is divided in two parts by the city's inner ring road at the Leipziger Turm tower. The part nearer to the market square is called the 'Lower Boulevard', while that which links Leipziger Turm and Riebeckplatz square and the station, is called the 'Upper Boulevard'. Riebeckplatz is the first part of Halle that visitors see. It was destroyed after WWII and rebuilt in concrete, with high tower blocks and, famously, a monument consisting of clenched fists representing the victory of socialism. The statue was removed in 2002 as part of a major renovation of the square. Further, the area in the centre of the flyover which acted as a tram hub, was lowered as the lines were then extended to the station itself. Retail units were built in this newly-lowered area below the flyover. One side of these are presented in photograph (d) in Fig. 8.21. It can also be seen that these are predominately empty. During my fieldwork, most of those which were occupied at the beginning, including a bakery-café, closed. Others which opened during the period, such as a confectionery shop and a discount clothes retailer, also quickly closed.

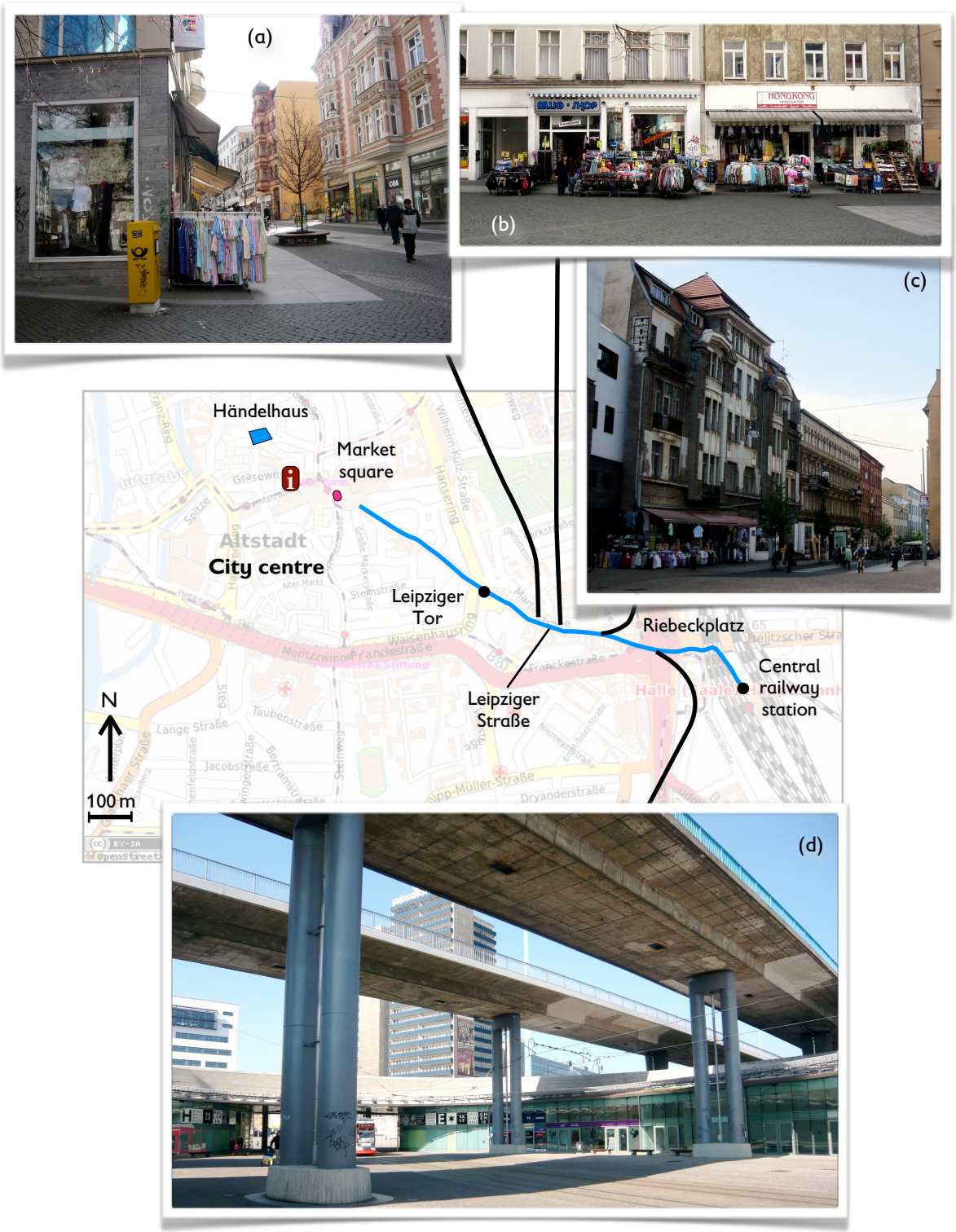


Fig. 8.21

Boulevard (Leipziger Straße) (a-c) and Riebeckplatz (d)

Base map © OpenStreetMap contributors, CC-BY-SA, http://www.openstreetmap.org/

The situation is repeated on the Upper Boulevard itself. Indeed, this part of Leipziger Strasse is the street called the 'boulevard of the bankrupt' (U. Freitag 2009a), referred to in Chapter 2, in need of rescue by the 'choco-king' of the Halloren chocolate company (U. Freitag 2009e). In the *Bild* article which coins the name relating to bankruptcy (U. Freitag 2009a), accompanied by seventeen small photographs of such premises, it is noted that thirteen of the sixty-two shops are empty, and that many are advertising closing-down sales. From my experience of Halle, such promises of closure are carried out. In the *Bild* article describing the 'choco-king's plans, the Boulevard also gets called the '*Ramsch-Meile*' ('tat/junk mile'). Some of the reasons why can be gleaned from photographs (a-c) of Leipziger Strasse on Fig. 8.21 showing a selection of low-price fabrics and hardware such as 'Frank's Cheap Shop' and 'Hong Kong Supermarket'. One contributor to HalleForum.de, 'neon', describes the house in photograph (c), Halle's 'first house' for visitors, as '*the* store sign for Halle: you came from the station, walked past a ruin and saw the sign for the [GDR-era CDU 'bloc party'] on it' ([n.d.] 2009–-c). Not having been there for a while, 'neon' wondered if the house had yet been renovated, or whether the sign was still there. I had noticed it myself so it will still there in mid-to-late 2009. A tourist from Northern Ireland whom I spoke to, and who had professionally been an urban regeneration manager for central government and administered international funding, thought that, in their own impression as a visitor, 'visitors to Halle must be depressed at the sight of the rows of derelict buildings which, although some rebuilding has started, gives the impression of an area long abandoned'. Commenting on the area, some Scottish elderly tourists I encountered one day nearby were, indeed, unimpressed, as the area confirmed their stereotypes of the greyness of former 'Communist' places.

People as a sticking plaster – contemporary consociates representing Halle

Given such a situation, Riebeckplatz has had ongoing questions over its development. There were long discussions over whether the 'Riebeck towers', vacant concrete high-rise tower blocks which overlook the square, should be knocked down. When the general decision was

made to do so, the point at which it was to occur was also a long-term discussion. The work eventually began after I had left Halle. However, while I was there, due firstly to its vital location for tourists, and secondly to the dilapidated state of these blocks and their base sections, the square was included in the debate over how to deal with Prince Charles' potential walk to the Händelhaus during the Händel-based festivities. While he might not be at that location during the visit, it was assumed many other visitors would. Here, however, unlike near the Händelhaus, there were to be no ghost-themed installations. Yet, in the same programme, it was to be included in the tarpaulin-based plans which would be used near the Händelhaus. Rather than simple billboard-style conventional advertising, certain *people* would be displayed. However, unlike the historical figures whose images are embedded above the retail unit fronts under the flyover and continue onto the square, more modern icons would be used. Rather than using one iconic image, of an iconic person, like Händel and his statue, a different set of persons were presented. It was to be the traders of the Upper Boulevard themselves (U. Freitag 2009c). Fig. 8.22 shows what form this took. Any doubt that the iconicity of those persons is suggested is tempered by the naming of this film-themed presentation of the traders. The sense of their star-like quality as presented in this 'Halleywood Boulevard', a clear allusion to the famous icon-frequented street in Los Angeles, is the painting of a red carpet-like feature upon the cobblestones, as can be seen in photograph (d) of Fig. 8.22. Photograph (c) shows an IT company's employees, a newspaper owner, as well as a hotel manager sitting on a 'red steed', which is also the name of the hotel. It will be noted from photograph (e) that there are figures dressed in period costume and alluding to Händel's period. Perhaps one might be Händel, but a crucial difference exists in that these are real people whom one could meet, playing Händel-like characters.

As it was Stadtmarketing who organised the advertising here too, during my interview with their representative I enquired why the decision had been taken to use people. Elsewhere I noted that in Halle and surrounding towns, buildings in need of purchase and repair are often covered with advertising by the estate agents or management companies(Hamilton 2010c).

These often take the form of artistic/graphic representations of what the building might look like once completed. I showed how these, and other forms of advertising on buildings, in a rhetoric culture sense, create narratives pointing to a future of wellbeing. There are certainly differences in the case of Riebeckplatz, as the high-rise towers were to be removed completely, and the supermarket (blue and yellow signage) was not in line for renovation. However, as a square which had seen development, was not finished, it thus still had a 'future' potential in a finalised form which could be presented. In these circumstances, in line with other places, and given the importance of the location, the possibility of using this form arises. However, the programme as planned and executed by Stadtmarketing was deliberately designed with sociality in mind. When I asked why there were people on the advertising and not the usual pictures of places, the representative said it was because

> that is what wakens Halle up. The chemist up there is a friend of mine [see Fig. 8.22 (b, far right)], and it is like that for many Hallenser, that they know someone. In Halle everyone knows everyone else. That is a very nice feeling, a fine feeling, the village character in a large city. [...] There are personalities whom everyone knows.

As a result, by placing all the businesspersons together who related to the area, 'it is a particular scene which belongs together'.

The representative went on to talk about the advertising with an explicit reference to pronouns. In Chapter 6 I noted Rainer and Rosi, the product promoters, being greeted with '*du*', the informal pronoun for 'you'. It was also noted that this can be used in German within situations to suggest familiarity, friendship or social solidarity. The Stadtmarketing representative used it too:

> It is the nice thing that it shows the *du* to *du*, it shows a social note, it shows the persons behind the pronouns. It is social, there are no machines, no buildings.

In this conversation, there were various themes, including, most clearly, the value of the 'personality' (in the sense of someone who is widely known), being employable as an icon to represent an area. This is clear through the 'star quality' inference drawn from Hollywood

Fig. 8.22

Halleywood-Boulevard

Boulevard and the filmstrip design being combined. However, the normal iconic star used to promote Halle, as might also be expected, especially at that point during a period celebrating his anniversary, was curiously absent. This, as the gateway to the city, an important location is somewhere where iconicity is already at play by dint of being the first thing experienced by the visitor. It is thus an iconic place in itself, and the need to make sure that the power it has to symbolise the city is adequately used is clearly noted by the authorities – hence the GDR-era fists set among modern buildings, and afterwards, the post-GDR renovations. Yet unlike Händel on the market square, who in natural terms *was* a person, these persons on the advertising tarpaulins are not historical characters. Rather, it is current living persons with whom one can and does interact with within the area who are displayed. In SRC terms, it was persons who have a much higher potential for consociational ability: people who others personally know as consociates.

Continuing to consider this from the SRC point of view, it was noted above that the journey from 'the Händel' to the Händelhaus is a narrative space in which discussion can occur. This pedestrian area is also one, as is the Boulevard. Here, once again, the Grey Diva can appear, and does. Although it may be a 'sticking plaster', this advertising is being used as something which covers up the Diva, and which attempts to overpower her enough that she is banished from the narratives and discussions. Rather than a statue or its representation, as in many situations so far viewed in this thesis, it is the consocial potential of the real, alive person which is important. It is the shared conversations, the transactions – the interactions with *Mitmenschen* – and the knowledge of those persons gained therethrough, which is especially valued in Halle. Indeed, in this case it is clearly and explicitly expressed as being behind the action. The person stating this, as a marketer and a born Hallenser who had attended university within a 40 km radius, would presumably have some knowledge of what is effective as a piece of rhetoric. Further, as his task is to represent the city itself, the suggestion must be that – like the *SUPERIllu* presentation of businesspersons – it is good to be seen as an enterprising city. Once again, however, this is tempered by intimating the social. Of course, the

representative identified other aspects of the city which tourists should be made aware of in general, such as water sports on the now pollution-free Saale river, or 'cultural lighthouses' such as the Frankesche Stiftungen, the Opera, the Moritzburg, among others. Yet, in this situation, and at this focal point of the city, the businessperson as businessperson, and as person, was in the centre point.

The man with the cup

I, personally, as ethnographer can confirm that the comment made by the Stadtmarketing representative in relation to his pharmacist friend was true for me at least. For, as suggested that it would be the case that everyone knew someone on the filmstrip, it was the case for me. While this was due to my interviewing of one in the course of fieldwork, on the opening of an Upper Boulevard-located second branch of their café, spending some time there I noticed a string of customers who seemed to be friends ora acquaintances of the owner and staff. Further, the Stadtmarketing representative knew him by name, and 'kn[ew] him well too'. Further, although I met the owner independently of him, within this city of between 200,000 and 250,000 people, Rainer's friend and product promotion colleague Matthias knew him as well. What is particularly interesting about the café is that the first branch is located extremely close to the Händelhaus, within the Händelkarree office, bar, performance space and retail complex. The owner, Dirk Lummitsch, is presented holding the cup in photograph (b) of Fig. 8.22, and Jenny, a member of staff, has been photoshopped and appears in the coffee cup in a miniature form![37]

As can be gleaned from the logo above him, there is a clear musical allusion in its name, Café Allegro, which I discovered was intentionally chosen to reflect the initial location in the Händelkarree. Below I will describe this theme and its use in more detail, because it is first

[37] Herr Lummitsch felt anonymity was not required and given the public nature of his work would likely have been futile to attempt to do so.

important to note that it was for reasons other than its connection to Händel that I noticed the chain. Although living in the city centre, I did not often frequent the Händelkarree before I had seen the second branch open and I thus thought it was a totally new venture. However, Lummitsch, formerly a manual worker, a trained insulation technician, told me during an interview – once again replete with 'life story' details – that he decided seven years previously that

> and at one point I thought that I did not want to do it for ever, (a) to be employed and (b) to be climbing all over scaffolding when fifty or sixty years old.

During a quiet period he had been made redundant, and after a visit to the USA when 'it was the start of this coffee shop system getting big', he and a friend decided to open a café. Now, seven years hence, he had decided to expand. However, as has been seen above, the choice of area might seem unusual and this is why I, as ethnographer and passing pedestrian, noticed the café in particular.

In the period both before and after the opening of Allegro on the Upper Boulevard, businesses along it had and have closed. Indeed, what caught my own attention shortly before Lummitsch's expansion was that a café at the Leipziger Turm end had closed. There are many discussion threads on HalleForum.de which discuss the future of the Upper Boulevard. In balance, they sound more negative than positive and many suggested that, despite passing pedestrians, the street suffered from its distance from the market place and due to the busy road which splits this part of the Boulevard from the Lower. In addition to this, in one discussion on the recently closed café – which was started by someone months after the event because, it seems, they had not noticed before this point in time – one poster, 'Adiop', claimed that he had spoken to the owner of the café about its closure ([n.d.] 2009–-a). According to 'Adiop', repeating the sense of negativity highlighted by the Stadtmarketing representative, 'the manager thought that one of the reasons was the mentality of the Hallenser to make their own city *kaputt*'. It was apparently the only reason supplied. However, Lummitsch thinks differently about the location and is positive about his choice.

During the interview I asked Lummitsch about his choice of location, which, given the straitened financial times brought about by the financial crisis which was still unfolding, seemed especially risky as a base for expansion. Apparently, others had expressed their doubt. Lummitsch recounted:

> Many people said before, when we were doing it, "upper!" – when you ask many old Hallenser, or [those] in your circle of acquaintances, "Upper Boulevard?", many of them said, "ohhh, hmmm, hmmm, dirty, fucked up ('*abgefucked*'), not so nice. But it is *not* so.

Rather, in a way reminiscent of the need to avoid 'static' thinking, as suggested by the poster in HalleForum.de, he saw a future in the area. He predicted improvement as time went on, and also beauty despite the current closed shops:

> When you look around here, when you look at the buildings, at the façades, they are very beautiful. You have also beautiful back internal yards, and I say in two or three years it will not be recognisable. It will develop and then, well, we're here.

The same had been the case, he suggested, in the Händelkarree. When Allegro opened,

> there were no other tenants there, we were the first ones. We said, "we'll try it", and when you look now there are massive bars all around. It has developed, and it will be the case here.

He saw this as a strategic investment, and suggested

> It will develop through time and it will be important then to be there already, and then in three or four years it will be more difficult. That is the idea.

After almost ten years since his initial opening, and almost two-an-a-half since the expansion, Lummitsch is still in business. From afar, at least, it seems that he is having some, as the HalleForum.de poster termed it, 'prosperity in Halle'. Although not present in the city, I note that he has developed and upgraded his website. Further, he daily posts updates, such as special dishes or special news, on the 'wall' of Allegro's Facebook page to a 'fan'-base of

approximately 80 (Café Allegro 2009–). Lummitsch is thus in contact with his customers, who respond to posts asking, for example, about that day's food quality. In following the trend of companies to employ social media in interacting with customers, Lummitsch can simultaneously fulfil both of the two parts of the forum poster's mantra. He is not 'thinking statically', while also 'getting involved'. Here, it is an interactive 'getting involved', in communication with an audience. Yet, there are other means whereby he 'gets involved', and he expresses this clearly. He claimed that in opening the new shop he wished to show that 'we come from the town, we live here in the city, and we are trying to help invigorate things (*mitzubeleben*)'. Lummitsch used, as has been noted often in various cases throughout this thesis, a verb with a prefix of *mit*-, which normally suggests a sense of doing something along with others. This communal prefix is not linguistically required here, so represents a conscious, or perhaps indeed unconscious, invocation of the linguistic trope used much among my informants in eastern Germany.

Lummitsch does indeed get much involved in such communal efforts to improve the area. His new website reproduces an article from Halle's other daily newspaper, the *Mitteldeutsche Zeitung*, in which he features very prominently (Pohle 2009). It concerns the efforts of the group of local traders in another of the streets leading from the market square who got together and worked to improve their street. Pictured smiling with its similarly smiling leader is Lummitsch, as a member of the equivalent body for the Upper Boulevard, an organisation which had first met as my fieldwork ended. While Lummitsch notes that they have already received very helpful advice, the other man says he is pleased to share experience in their process of creation of what is called in the title a 'strolling-mile' ('*Flaniermeile*'). This word, which is closer to the English-language meaning of 'boulevard', contrasts greatly with the 'tat-mile' already encountered above. This sense of working together to benefit the community as well as oneself is mirrored in Lummitsch's own words during our interview. After his American trip, he *did* return and set up his business in his home town, unlike many other of his co-citizens. He suggested that

> doing it in Halle was something to do with me growing up in the city and that I do not want to go away but to do something here – to make my contribution to society.

While Lummitsch enjoys living in his hometown, and while it gains from having his long-term employees, his knowledge of the place and its people is beneficial for his business. In SRC terms, Lummitsch is both very proficient in his ability to rhetorically employ both cultural items and likewise can intersubjectively anticipate the needs of his customer base. He grew up in one of the new-build working class suburbs, 'took part (*mitgemacht*) in this whole school system' in the GDR, and appreciated his childhood during the period. When we talked about the GDR, he said that people in the east 'are more open, have a more open way and they interact with each other in a quite different way'. In the same sense, he suggested, as others have done throughout this thesis, that there indeed does exist an 'eastern German mentality'. Yet he highlights the positive understanding of the term:

> When you say, "I'll do that then" and they are also old-eastern German, so to speak, then when he gives you his word he keeps to it.

However, he was extremely keen to express that he thought

> that does not mean that the people in the old *Bundesländer* are all shit. In the old *Bundesländer* they took part (*mitgemacht*) in a whole other development than we did.

Their propensity for sociality was no less strong and

> I think they have their own friendships just the same, and take care of things.

Indeed, Allegro's coffee supplier came from the old *Bundesländer*. The story of how this came about highlights the social, however.

Lummitsch began the process of choosing a coffee brand for Allegro by searching the national coffee manufacturers' federation website, and then telephoned around various suppliers. One stood out, and there was

> right from the start a positive feedback on the telephone, let's say. This was, you know what it's like, you haven't seen someone but you notice straight away there is a certain ideology and empathy.

After testing some samples, he travelled to Stuttgart to see the small family firm's works. Lummitsch found it very congenial and attractive, and certain themes from previous chapters in this thesis re-emerge in his description:

> They had a really nice factory environment, the [female] boss was *per Du* with the packers, all the workers, and greeted others by shaking hands. It was a good feeling.

As in Chapters 3 and 7, there is an importance put on solidarity in the workplace, and mirroring what was also stated above by the representative of Stadtmarketing, the use of the informal second-person pronoun is important.

Alongside the firm's approach, with whom he claims a now-longstanding set of good relations, Lummitsch was also most impressed by the coffee itself. He is proud to be its only café in eastern Germany, and highlights the brand on his website and places the logo on the front signage of his branches. This also features a representation of Halle's traditional red and white coat-of-arms, amid a theme which in both locations features predominately the colour red. In terms of images, of symbols, there is a mixture of Halle symbols and, in the form of the coffee logo, those of commercialism, and indeed western at that. However, Halle is very much the predominant part in the symbolic assemblage, and in any case, a 'nice' coffee company, whom Lummitsch praised for their sociality and personal relations, constitutes the rest. This interest in persons is of course, as seen above, not limited to Lummitsch. Yet it is interesting how, as outside on the advertising tarpaulins some hundred metres further towards the station, persons are used to present a message. This is best demonstrated by the menu. There are only two persons to whom a named reference is made within the items it offers to customers. These, and the menu itself, can be seen in Fig. 8.23. This chapter has already mentioned both of these persons. Händel, who has a macchiato coffee named after him, and whose image indeed

features on the front cover, may have been more visible that the other, waitress Jenny. Yet, her appearance on the menu is also symbolically significant. Her solyanka soup, her version of a regularly-consumed eastern German adaptation (created firstly during the GDR era) of the Russian original, is the other named dish. Although this might hint at the fact she naturally has a higher day-to-day importance in the café than Händel could, the choice of having her name there at all was very much intentional.

Lummitsch had already told me that the personal touch was important, and highlighted the fact that he prefers to hire more mature, permanent staff, and not students, because rather than a 'flowing stream of people standing there' alongside competence they brought the opportunity for staff to build up relationships with customers. I had remarked after a few visits, when I ordered coffee-to-go, Jenny had noticed how many sweetener tablets I took, and began to put them in for me. Therefore, when Lummitsch pointed out that one of the benefits of this building relationships was 'if you know they always drink a large coffee and then you come in and your large coffee is sitting there', it actually had happened to some extent. Thus, this personalisation was behind the solyanka being highlighted as Jenny's creation. When I asked if it was a special version (before I knew Jenny's name) Lummitsch said:

> You see already again people notice that! The simple solyanka, everyone knows that. But when you say that in this case that Jenny made it, you see that people ask straight away again and again! Through that they try it more easily. They say, "Jenny made the solyanka, good!".

Jenny is being employed here not only to make the soup, but employed rhetorically as the rhetorical item to sell it. However, it is also her ability to convey a message of welcoming friendliness, and a personal touch, which allows this to occur.

Jenny, in both name and her own self, are the rhetorical expression of a certain eastern German cultural item. It may well be coincidental that she appears on the menu linked to a dish linked to the GDR and also today's eastern Germany, but in any case her rhetorical strength

Fig. 8.23

Café Allegro menu, featuring both Händel's macchiato, and Jenny's solyanka soup

lies in being a person. This is related to her own ability to be intersubjective, and act as a representative of that ability in general. It is this more personal and social aspect which renders her potentially most attractive to an eastern audience. It shows customers that she is valued by the management, which suggests a solidarity-rich and friendly working climate. This is mirrored, for example, in both Lummitsch's own preference for a coffee company with similar personalised working relations, as well as in *SUPERIllu's* presentation of the Saxon bakery king's new expanded factory facilities in Chapter 4. Naturally, friendliness and personalised service are also attractive to customers from western Germany, or indeed, elsewhere. However, for this eastern German public it has a special resonance. In comparison, though, the other person named on the menu might potentially be viewed as the counterpart aimed at tourists. Certainly, as has been seen much in this chapter, Händel is viewed as having high touristic potential. However, in Café Allegro on the Upper Boulevard, his appearance in other places than the menu is aimed rather more, and though subtly in my opinion, deliberately, at Hallenser.

Fig. 8.24 shows a number of images of Allegro on the Upper Boulevard. Photograph (a) shows the outside view (since updated), while the others (b-e) show various views of the interior. It can be seen that the red colour scheme is prevalent, as noted above. Further, as an example of Lummitsch's adaptation of his facilities to his anticipated publics, while the Händelhaus-adjacent branch is smaller and caters more to students from the nearby music department of the Martin-Luther-University, photograph (c) shows provision of toys and books for children, highlighting it as a pleasant place for families. Information brochures for tourists are also provided. However, the wall decoration, and specifically the paintings, and their locations as shown on Fig. 8.25, are particularly relevant here. Lummitsch told me that the area within the shop mirrors the Boulevard itself. Reflecting the actual direction a pedestrian would walk, the physical locations of Leipziger Turm and the train station are represented upon the respective walls of the café, painted by a local artist. This is because, maintaining the theme of persuading Hallenser of the value of their city,

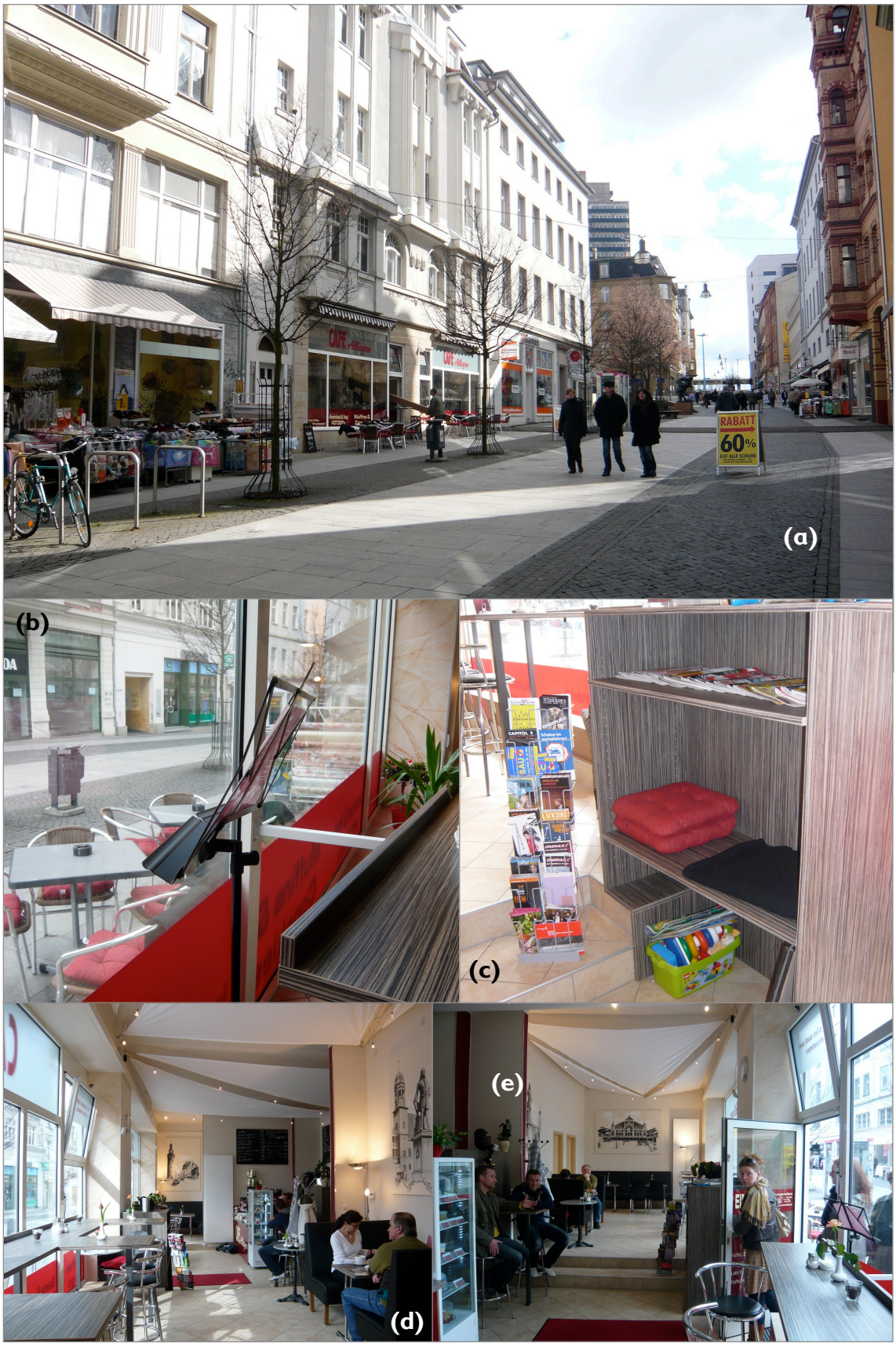


Fig. 8.24

Café Allegro (II) on the Upper Boulevard (Leipziger Straße)

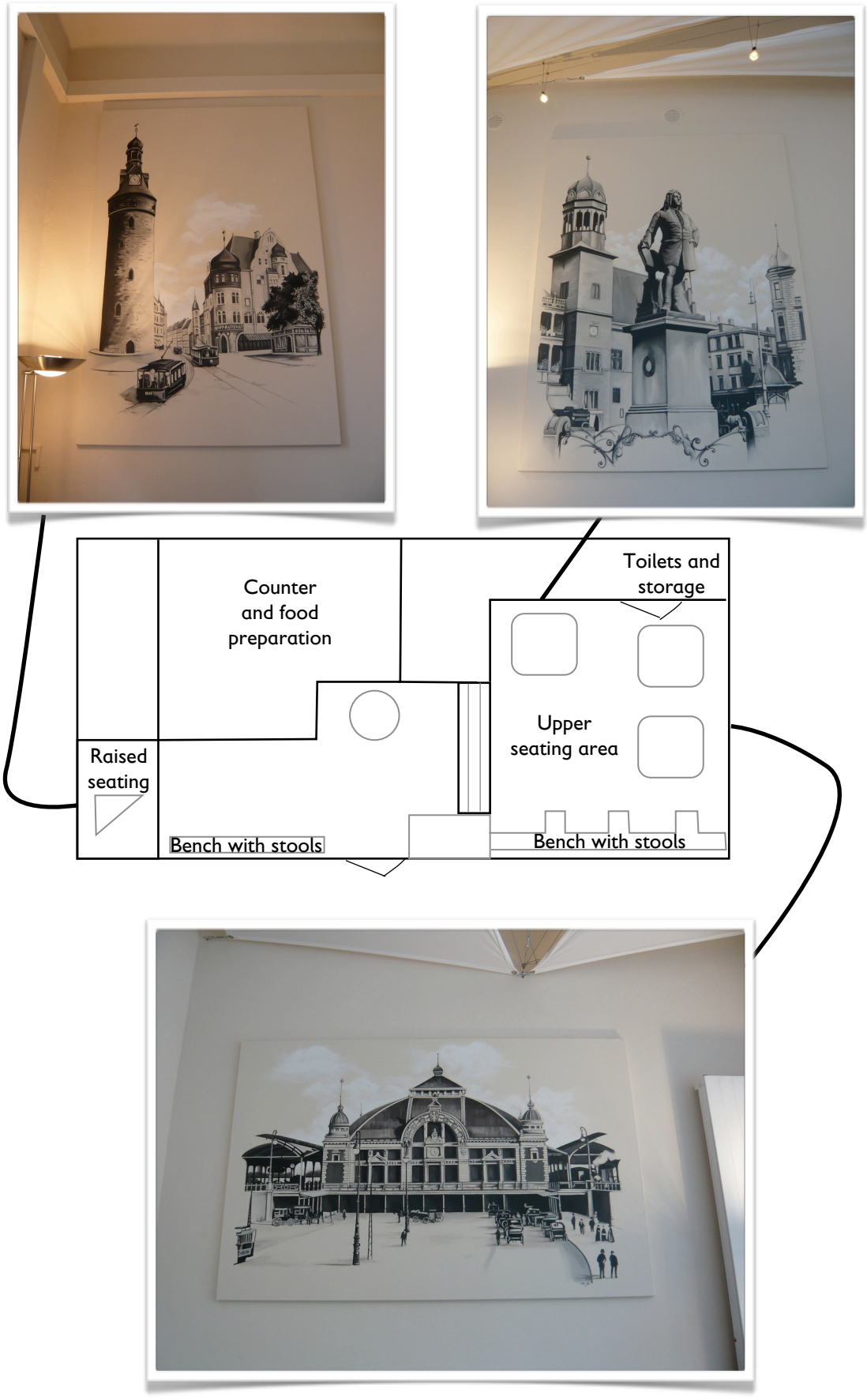


Fig. 8.25

Inside Café Allegro 2 on Leipziger Straße

Fig. 8.26

Café Allegro (the original)

Fig. 8.27

Coffee with *Schorsch*, in the original Allegro

> we wanted simply to show this Boulevard has existed for an eternity and has had a certain course through history.

While these are important icons recreated visually and spatially – and it is the image of the station before which Lummitsch and the other man were presented in the newspaper article – the more famous icon is no less visible.

The name Allegro was chosen deliberately for the original location on account of the proximity to the Händelhaus, and musical terms feature on the menu. While it can be seen from Fig. 8.25 that Händel's image is in the centre of the paintings in Allegro on the Boulevard, in the original, he is much more dominant – and interactive. Fig. 8.26 shows the interior of the first branch opened. Lummitsch noted that notes, staves, clefs, and musical instruments were much more prevalent in the interior design here. However, as Fig. 8.27 shows, it is Händel who attracts demands most attention, as he seems to be enjoying his visit. In Germany or Austria, it is common to share tables with other, unknown patrons if space is limited. Interaction is limited beyond a general greeting. The Händel painted on the wall could not answer the question if there were free space, but he is not much less interactive than a normal customer in such a situation would be! Lummitsch told me that

> there is a large portrait of Händel because, he is, let's say, one of the most important sons of the city. It's a theme with which you can really score.

However, alongside the interactivity of the image which chimes well with what has been noted throughout this thesis on sociality and its value, Händel, as well as the other aspects of interior design, are no less fascinatingly imaginative as the *Eigen-Sinn*-imbued versions of the new city logo as analysed above.

If the concept of the global assemblage is taken up once again, it can be seen that both Allegro's branches take this form. Here is a US-inspired takeaway coffee format, operating on a capitalist business model, set on expansion, mixed with clearly local aspects. However, rhetorically, Lummitsch's choice of cultural items gives the impression that Halle is to the fore.

The patron is addressed by a message which invokes eastern German sociality. This is strengthened by the narrative qualities of the images at either end of the second branch. While it appears to be a simple reflection of geographical reality, there is an historical narrative of past, and potentially future, prosperity and civic pride which is the intended connotation. On a phenomenological level, it could be argued that a citizen who after arriving at the station visited the café and noticed the images, would have a certain amount of time while walking to the market square to take those things into consideration. However, to return to the concept of the assemblage, and the public, a further example of Händel and Halle being combined to sell the city through the innovative potential in their rhetorical value is even more interesting. In this case, however, rather than focussing on the high culture of Händel, the Diva and the industrial past which created her are brought into the mix. In so doing, the creators of this rhetoric – naturally including the self-employed – attempt to rehabilitate not only the city but also the working class culture of its inhabitants. In some senses, it is yet another attempt to counteract the grim portrayal of the city as was noted in other sources such as those viewed in Chapter 3.

Embracing the diva, embracing Halle, and oneself

Until this point, three different persons (or in one case, set of persons) have been viewed as being employed to represent the city. On one hand, there exists the historical, famous figure of Händel. On the other is the naughty, depressing Grey Diva who must be vanquished. In a modern iconic representation, on Riebeckplatz the present tradespersons of the city display its current industriousness and entrepreneurship. The two examples of Stadtmarketing's attempts to show Halle more positively seen in this chapter demonstrate clearly the complicated nature of such a task. This is partly related to the fact two audiences have to be catered for: the internal and the external. The 'Halleywood Boulevard' advertising on Riebeckplatz does this very effectively. A man holding a coffee cup with a waitress inside, as Lummitsch and Jenny feature, is still a successful man operating a coffee business whether he is one of your

consociates or not. For the external audience, it shows Halle is a town of business. For the internal audience, it reminds you Halle is a town of business, and that you know these people. They exist, so be positive even if the street is a bit run down, as these people are making it better, seems to be the message. The new logo, however, was criticised for being too opaque mostly due to its banality, indistinctness and inefficient use of Halle's symbols. In a sense, the logo's intended adaptability, with asterisk for example, is what lends to its *Eigen-Sinn*-rich treatment by local people. A city's 'identity', like that of its people, and individuals within that, is open to the re-presentation of the representation to a considerable level over time, and in various contexts related to the *kairos*. However, that *Eigen-Sinn* itself can also be viewed as being used to represent the city. And as it is the Halle people themselves who are *Eigensinnig* in this connection, they are added to the mixture of 'good' images of Halle, accompanied by one of the heretofore unmentioned characteristics of the Diva which the Halle people *themselves* contribute, alongside her architecture, former pollution and industrial heritage.

Whereas the 'mentality' of the Hallenser as shown above in the exhortation by the editorial of the *Mitteldeutsche Zeitung* is a negative one, there is a different aspect to this which I found hard to avoid in the city It is not the positive aspect mentioned by Lummitsch, but one which has tended to be placed into the negative side of the balance sheet. Halle people were often described to me as being un-keen to suffer fools gladly, and to shun too much ceremony. In addition they were characterised as having a quick sense of humour to match their bad temper and cantankerousness. Westerners who moved there told me they were surprised by the way Halle people spoke to one another. For example, the blogger who was the focus of Hamilton (2010a) posted a story about an incident where someone complained about the sausage they had received from a fast food stall (Knoke 2009). The conversation, began with 'this sausage tastes shit!'. The seller replied: 'Well, you don't *have* to eat it!'. Apparently 'rather than a bloody argument about the texture of the skin or the fat content [...] they became the best of friends'. The blogger's suggestion of how a conversation works is thus:

> A straightforward criticism, a quick-witted response. Thus the battle lines are clear, the weapons drawn. So then you can comfortably talk about the weather and wish them a nice weekend.

Halle people have noted similar things themselves. An outdoor exhibition on the market square in 2006, which took its name from the geological fault which runs below it – in German the '*Hallesche Störung*', but which can be translated as the 'Halle disturbance' or 'perturbation' – played with the theme in a tongue-in-cheek but good-humoured fashion. I learned about it from the book which accompanied it, which displays the texts and photographs of Halle's places and people over time who have 'provided that many unique and ludicrous/strange/quirky things have happened, and still do' (Grashoff 2008:7). It presents famous people as '*Störer*' ('disturbers'), as well as documenting the positive and negative – and at times unusual – things which have happened in the city. In a section on 'the "charm" of the Hallenser', there are stories which show Halle's humoured grittiness, and it quotes Hans-Dietrich Genscher, the former federal foreign minister. Genscher was born in Halle, but left before the borders were made impervious in 1961. A politician in the FDP and foreign minister at the time of reunification, he was described during a guided tour as 'Halle's second most-famous son'. Indeed, his own birth house has been recently saved from demolition and then renovated (U. Freitag 2009h). Of his city of birth, Genscher is noted to have said: 'Hallenser – they are people with unlimited charm but which they are very good at hiding' (Grashoff 2008:61). Apparently, from what I could detect, the directness and gruffness involved was partly due to the Halle dialect and speech style, further based on its working class roots.

Talking Halle, talking *Hallisch*

At one point during my time in Halle, I 'thought' its dialect, Hallisch, was being generally used. The basis I had for this was that I could hear something which sounded like it should be Halle's dialect. It sounded very different to what was spoken in Austria, or in Bavaria. It seemed to

have the phonemes it should in keeping with its location between Saxony-proper and Berlin, the Saxon vowels appearing alongside the /g/ replaced by /j/ as to the north. It seemed to follow generally the dialect maps found in language atlases, as well as those which show where linguistic lexical faults lie (e.g. '*Sonnabend*' instead of the standard, southern '*Samstag*' for 'Saturday' [König and Paul 1994:186]). The press, in the form of *Bild*, could only add to such a sense, asking cheerfully on 26 June 2008 'why is everyone suddenly talking like us?' (U. Freitag 2008). After noting a new comedy duo touring Germany to great acclaim, and performing in dialect from very near Halle, it reported on an interview with Andrea Seidel from the local university's German studies department. Seidel is quoted as having noticed dialect being spoken more often in Halle and surrounding areas. However, it is a mixture of traditional dialect and standard German, a regiolect. She claims this movement is occurring on account of a reaction to globalisation and a resurgence in the media and performers themselves. However, Seidel adds that she believes any resurgence is a last blossoming and it will die at some point due to the language's general history of standardisation.[38]

This positive picture having been turned on its head towards the end, further 'alarm' came in an article approximately eight months later in which it is more explicitly claimed to be in peril. Asking 'is Halle dialect dying out?' the claims of the local dialect club that fewer speakers exist is rendered more alarming due to a survey by ElitePartner.de, a select online dating service for professionals. After it asked 4000 members which dialect was their favourite, *Bild*, concerned, notes that Halle was 'so unattractive it doesn't even appear on the list', which it describes, no doubt for the amorous among Halle's elite, is 'no good sign' (Wätzold and Prenz 2009). It might sound less than serious, but is reminiscent of Halle's place on Germany's '*Floplist*' of cities, as noted in Chapter 3. The paper also re-quotes the previous interview with Seidel, with its bathetic, fatalistic tones. This article seems to have been part of a planned series, because in it, and over the next three days in others, is serialised a small glossary of words (in alphabetical order across the set) 'so the dialect does not die out'.

[38] If this is based on an academic publication I have not managed to trace it.

The words in this glossary are perhaps, rather than mere accent, more significant. These are the words which are apparently unique – the USP of the dialect, so to speak. However, the consensus seems to be that it is an assemblage 'even if the people in Halle and hinterland don't like it at all: their dialect is a mix of Upper Saxon, Thuringian, Low German and the *Rotwelsch* thieves' cant which was spoken above all among the 'Glaucha nobility' (U. Freitag 2008). *Rotwelsch* has a long pedigree, first named in the thirteenth century, but contains words from Yiddish and Gypsy origins (König and Paul 1994:133). The reference to 'Glaucha nobility' is an ironic nickname for the very impoverished, working-class people of the area around Glauchaer Platz, which was apparently meant as 'derisive but not completely derogative' (Wünsch 2008:8). German linguist König even notes a past trend to deny dialectal status to such speech, suggesting 'there is no special term for the language of the metropolitan working class, yet conversely calling their language "dialect" is avoided' (König and Paul 1994:135). Even without this, something which has elements of Jewishness, Gypsy-ness and impoverished-ness, might for those who have some knowledge of German history, seem something which would be less than celebrated. However, what is interesting in this regard is the main photograph used in the next article in *Bild*'s series on the local language.

The article in question, entitled '*We are saving our beautiful dialect*', introduces the two men from the language club quoted the previous day (Wätzold 2009). The article is pictured in Fig. 8.28. One is a tram driver, born in 'dialect-quarter Glaucha'. The other, a telephone engineer, notes that 'most people think whoever speaks Hallisch is quite low down' in status terms. However, while recognising his own professional need to speak the standard language, he enjoys speaking Hallisch without embarrassment, and likewise enjoys the inhabitants of other cities speaking in their dialects. Recalling the previous article, he is quoted in dialect as saying 'just because it isn't sexy doesn't mean it has to die'. There is an interesting visual juxtaposition in the photograph accompanying the text of the article, in that the two men representing the language, one from a working class area himself, are not the only faces which appear. Placed

between the two men is a bust of Händel, with which they are posing. One of the men looks angry, fist clenched; the other looks more perturbed and worried. The caption reveals the reason for this appearance of the composer: '[they] do not know whether Händel spoke Hallisch or not, but they cherish the dialect as much as others his music'. Here, in particular, there is a strong and explicitly-made contrast between the high culture of Händel, and that of the Hallenser themselves. There is an inherent call, in the photograph, where the men's eye level is at the same as Händel's, at least to treat both equally. In any case, there is a sense of urgency presented within it, that action be taken.

Talking *Hallisch,* talking business

The reason why Händel features in this chapter, as part of this thesis indeed, is his ubiquity. Living in Halle at any time, let alone 2008-09, it would be impossible to avoid him and the myriad uses he receives. Thus, he appears in this chapter before the 'stars' on the 'Halleywood-Boulevard', a new concept showing the new icons for a new period of Halle's history. But Händel still dominates. Might there also be some space for dialect, symbolic of the city's most intense 'grey diva' period and the working-class residents of the city involved in that period, in this assemblage of presentations of persons being used to sell? The example of Stefan Krause, a web-developer and souvenir designer, provides evidence that there might. Born on the Baltic coast, he moved to Halle for an internship and stayed. He and his business partner produce a myriad of products, which in interview Krause said are the 'counterpart to the classical Halle souvenirs'. Their objects sell in a number of shops in Halle, and online. What is interesting is that the Halle souvenirs are not only for tourists, but have been designed to appeal to the people of Halle themselves. Alongside this, they are designed are for those who have left the city 'and wish to have a memento of their city' with them. I had noticed Krause's business firstly through the Startup of the Month feature on the Univations website, and indeed, it was first through him that I noticed the 'Grey Diva' image being used. He produced a bag emblazoned with 'Halle. Yesterday grey. Tomorrow diva!'. Krause told me the intention in this phrase was

Wie zwei Sprach-Künstler um unsere Mundart kämpfen

Wir retten unser schönes Hallisch!

Ob Händel Hallisch sprach, wissen Jürgen Seydewitz (57, li.) und Wolfram Föhse (44) nicht, aber die Mundart pflegen sie wie andere seine Musik

FEHLHAMM

Von JAN WATZOLD

Halle – *Ein bisschen ist es wie bei Asterix. Ein Häuflein Unbeugsamer leistet den Eindringlingen erbitterten Widerstand. Nur geht es hier nicht um Gallier und Römer, sondern um Halloren und die Bedrohung ihrer Sprache...*

Halles Gallier heißen Wolfram Föhse (44) und Jürgen Seydewitz (57). Ihr Gegner lässt sich freilich schwerer bekämpfen. Weil er nur zu hören ist!

So berichtete BILD

„Mir verteidschn unser Hallisch jejen das Vordring vom Hochdeutschn", sagt Föhse. Der im Mundart-Viertel Glaucha geborene Straßenbahnfahrer ahnt zwar, dass er damit auf verlorenem Posten steht: „Awwer nur, weil's nich sexy is, muss's ja nich sterm."

Deshalb gründeten Föhse und Seydewitz vor neun Jahren gemeinsam mit zwei Dutzend Gleichgesinnten den Mundart-Verein *„De Schnatzjer"*. „Die Spatzen" – so die Übersetzung – machen seitdem für Hallisch Front, so oft sie können.

Als gleichnamiges Kabarett tourt Seydewitz, dessen Mutter mit Hans-Dietrich Genscher Sandkasten und Dialekt teilte, zusammen mit Föhse durch Sportlerkneipen, Kleinkunstbühnen und Seniorenklubs. Dort lässt sich das Duo dann über „De Bisastudje", „De Arweetsajentur" oder „Lähm un Schule" im Allgemeinen aus.

Dabei wissen die Sprachbewahrer: Zu mehr als einem kurzweiligen Zeitvertreib taugt die geliebte Mundart kaum noch. „Wer Hallisch spricht, ist für die meisten Leute ganz unten", weiß Seydewitz.

Weshalb sich der gelernte Fernmeldemechaniker im Tagesgeschäft auch ganz bewusst eines „heimatlosen Hochdeutschs" befleißigt: „Allerdings blutenden Herzens, wenn ich Bayern oder Kölner unbeschwert im Heimat-Slang schwatzen höre."

Mittlerweile hat der „Schnatzjer"-Verein nur noch acht Mitglieder. Die anderen sind gestorben oder im Hallisch-Ruhestand. Föhse und Seydewitz ist es egal: „Un wemmer de lätzten Mohiganer sin, mir mochen weider."

Hallisch von A bis Z

Damit unsere Mundart nicht ausstirbt, druckt BILD in den kommenden Tagen die schönsten hallischen Vokabeln. Heute von E wie „eepeln" bis G wie „Gleche".

Hallisch – Deutsch

eepeln – hatschen, humpeln, schlecht laufen;
einstreichen – behalten;
estimiern – beachten;
Fahnenprutz – Fahnenschmuck;
Falle – Bett;
Fatz – Kleinigkeit;
Feez – Spaß;
Fisafeß – Gegenüber;
Flebbe – Ausweispapier;
flecken – flutschen;
Fleeschkiste – Sarg;
Flohkmolle – Bett;
funzen – weinen;
Furje – Wutausbruch;
Futtch – Dolch;
Galle – Festtracht;
Gahnsche – Kanpartie;
gambeln – balgen;
Gent – Leute;
Gleister (im) – betrunken sein;
gneddern – schimpfen;
Gnedscher – Murmel;
Gleche – Arbeit.

Schicken Sie uns Ihre Lieblingswörter

Eine Mundart ist ein Schatz, den einem niemand rauben kann, sagt man. Hüten Sie diesen Schatz – unser Hallisch? Haben Sie typisch hallische Lieblingswörter, die Sie gern benutzen, Ihren Kindern beibringen?

Schreiben Sie diese Begriffe auf, zusammen mit einer kurzen Erklärung. Und schicken Sie Ihre Lieblingswörter an BILD Halle: halle@bild.de oder BILD-Redaktion, Postfach 200160, 06002 Halle. Kennwort: LIEBLINGSWÖRTER.

Fig. 8.28

The men saving their beautiful dialect

(Wätzold 2009)

to think of Halle's past and its future. Yet it is a narrative, a powerful story seed suggesting a bright future, but one which keeps its sense of Halle past and (present) grittiness.

The Univations profile for the business is interesting not only because it reveals the main range, but also offers some suggestion about the way the dialect is used. It is described as a 'friendly product range in the character of the typical Halle-dialect impishness' (Univations 2009). The range is quite diverse, and a selection can be seen in Figs. 8.29-31. For example, in Fig. 8.29 there is a breakfast cup with spoon which carries the text '*In Halle bist du früher aus der Falle!*'. This translates as 'in Halle you get out of bed earlier'. '*Falle*' is dialect for 'bed', and the phrase is, according to Krause, a playful adaptation of the sometimes criticised advertising slogan for Saxony-Anhalt: 'we get up earlier'. There is a badge which bears the text '*Räume das Jelumpe weg!*', meaning 'clear out the rubbish!'. One *Frühstücksbrett*, a small individual cutting board popular in Germany at the breakfast table, carries a map of Halle. Another has the text, '*Mache de Oochen uff!*' – 'Open your eyes!' – which has a waking reference relevant to breakfast time, but carries the connotation that perhaps one's eyes should remain open at other times. However, the most interesting object(s) in view of this chapter are Ische and Scheeks.

Lexically, '*Ische*' is the Hallisch word for 'woman', and '*Scheeks*' is the equivalent for man, or brother. These words are quite well known generally, and appear comparatively quite often. Indeed, I remember the first time I heard it, when one elderly lady referred to me as '*der Scheeks*' when commenting to her friend after she thought some tram ticket inspector had been too meticulous when checking my (valid) ticket! In the commercial world, the Landsberger brewery makes a pun with its 'Scheeks-Bier', with a label which places Halle on a par with other places in Germany with a famous beer (e.g. Cologne, Bavaria, East Frisia) but mentioning that 'in Halle they drink Scheeks-bier'. However, given my argument that the consociational personality is important to eastern Germans, this example from Krause's assortment is particularly interesting. Here, they are salt and pepper cellars who take the form of human figures embracing, shown in Fig. 8.30. The figurines are not unique to Halle and I have seen

Fig. 8.29

Selection of Halle-Souvenirs products –with dialect thereon

(Source: http://halle-souvenirs.de/)

Fig. 8.30

Ische und Scheeks: salt and pepper cellars

(Source: http://halle-souvenirs.de/)

Fig. 8.31

A lively Händel on a postcard created by the young souvenir designer

(Source: scan of card given to me at interview)

them in various colour combinations in numerous places, and not only in Germany. However, they have been tailored to the city in two regards. Krause saw them in a design shop in Weimar, and thought they could be adapted to the Halle city colours of red and white. However, he thought they were a perfect souvenir due to the 'hearty embrace'. Once again, this sense of togetherness, of solidarity, and consociationality, is seen as something which can represent Halle, and something people would spend money on as a symbol. Krause does not ignore Händel by any means. For example, he makes badges. He produces postcards featuring the composer, but as he noted, as can be seen in Fig. 8.31, 'this is not like the classic card with four or five pictures on it, this is the witty version' of Händel. This playfulness, innovation and moulding of cultural items with *Eigen-Sinnig* humour is something that has been seen throughout this chapter.

Conclusion

In this chapter, there is a perceptible sense of persons being used in various situations both to represent the city and to persuade that it is a good place to be. There is a global-ish assemblage of person-for-place, with, most noticeably, Händel as a classic, timeless, golden-age world figure, acting as an antidote to the 'Grey Diva'. As has been clear, this mixture produces an element of 'friction' (Tsing 2005), but it is also an energetic, creative variety of it. There are also different ways of using persons to improve the city's image, with different publics in mind. Händel may be, as the Stadtmarketing representative noted, the 'common denominator'. Further, he may well represent some high culture ideal, but contemporary sources suggest he had a bit of the diva about him, the directness that Hallenser often say they do. As Halle may be having an 'off period' in its history, it appears its most famous son, like anyone, had his 'moments'. Händel's consociate Charles Burney, gives this description:

> He was impetuous, rough and peremptory in his manners and conversation, but totally devoid of ill-nature or malevolence; indeed there was an original humour and pleasantry in his most lively sallies of anger or impatience, with his broken

> English, were extremely risible. [...] Handel's general look was somewhat heavy and sour, but when he *did* smile, it was his sire the sun, bursting out of a black cloud. There was a sudden flash of intelligence, wit, and good humour, beaming in countenance which I hardly ever saw in any other. (Dean and Hicks 1997:72)

There is a certain, likely coincidental, parallel between Halle's reputation and that of the icon most used rhetorically for it to 'sell itself'. Halle may have a reputation regarded at times as negative, but, as I hope I have shown in this thesis, positive energy is used to counteract this. Very often it is rhetorical in its nature. And what of the other icon, the Grey Diva? Well, according to the Stadtmarketing representative, she has matured a bit too. In a rhetoric culture analysis, a personification is once again striking. As the representative noted, now the Diva 'is a nice neighbour you like to go for a walk with'. Perhaps you might take her out for a coffee too. Thanks to one public representative of the city, you can even sit beside Händel, another personal representative of the city, in a pleasant café when doing so.

9 Drawing conclusions

Halle as a rhetorical place with consocial and rhetorical residents

This thesis has been about a city and its people, and how eastern Germans in that city of Halle deal with the vicissitudes of life while trying to make their living in what has been shown to be a situation where things have often been difficult. I have shown how that city has built up a problematic reputation since reunification. On the city, commenting about how at times people from outside – especially from the richer parts of the old *Bundesländer* – someone said in an interview:

> Even in GDR times Halle had a 'bad' reputation because there were only workers here. In comparison to Leipzig there are fewer middle-class intellectuals. That affects how a town is. That means the people can be 'hard'. It is difficult to understand it at first but you get to know that.

This person found Halle a positive place, and, mirroring the mantra witnessed from HalleForum.de for a successful life in Halle, there was always 'beauty on the second glance' if one made the effort, and were open enough, to think and explore. I hope that this thesis has allowed me to do so and to show that Halle is a place where very positively engaging and creative things occur. As part of this task, at the beginning of this thesis, I set out two questions which should be answered by its end. The first question related to the thesis' production as part of a project to investigate the use of sociality and rhetoric culture theory (Carrithers 2005a, b, 2008, 2009b, [n.d.]). In that vein, I asked:

> To what extent can rhetoric be seen in the process of creating, modifying and dealing with events within the social life of persons living in eastern Germany?

In order to answer that question, it was of course necessary to choose a topic through which ethnographic data, on which to base it, could be gained. Having chosen the question of the personhood of the self-employed in Halle an der Saale for this purpose, and in light of its current and historical socio-economic situation, I asked

> Which rhetorical items, techniques and schemes are employed by the self-employed in eastern Germany to describe their choices and activities given their seeming incompatibility with the long-embedded sociality and conception of personhood of the past?

From this work of ethnography, the answer to the first question is clear. Rhetoric is very much visible in the processes of creating, modifying and dealing with events in the lives of persons living in eastern Germany. It is indeed visible outside eastern Germany as well. It functions on the interpersonal level, within the media and also within individuals themselves as they make the decisions, take the actions and justify these, as they live their lives. It is also clear that the rhetoric from one of these domains, and from different times and places, can be replicated and modified in another, providing further evidence of the great creativity of humans as they create sociality and culture. They create narratives, use metaphors, story seeds and pronouns to great effect in these processes. Sociality and rhetoric culture theory is indeed a valuable theoretical tool for anthropologists.

In answering the second question, it is necessary to consider each chapter's findings taken together as a whole. In Chapter 3, I presented Halle's current and historical political, social and economic situation. I showed how Halle's working class, industrial past, intimately connected to the political rhetoric of the state socialist period, had helped foster in the city, reflecting eastern Germany itself, a sense of personhood which not only highlighted the value of work, but also doing so collectively. These values, the shunning of individualism and selfishness, had infused into the realm outside the working world too. I also demonstrated how the city's economic fortunes have been problematic since political reunification and the coming of a market economy which drastically reduced the industrial base in which this sense of personhood had

been forged. I further showed how this had led to dissatisfaction with the western economic system which had helped bring this situation about, as well as having created a negative image of a city shrinking in its population and physical size which has become connected to its negative reputation in wider discourse. It was seen that not only the system but also westerners themselves could face criticism for selfishness and arrogance. Suggesting that self-employment is a particular nexus where the broader themes combine in a fascinating way, where the need to collectively improve the economic life of the city is linked with personal gain, I moved on to show, in Chapter 4, how great rhetorical effort is made to encourage people into self-employment. By presenting books, pamphlets and magazine articles I showed how it is suggested that people must change their characteristics in order to become the ideal type of the businessperson.

This ideal type of the businessperson is itself created within the texts studied in a deeply rhetorical way. Narratives are used to show how change can occur, and the rhetorical effect of this is increased by using individual, named persons to do so, to whom we are supposed to relate. For eastern German audiences, compared to those texts created for a broader German public, the details placed in the narratives highlight the social characteristics of these persons, recalling more the working practices and personhood of the past. I showed how this somewhat reflects the 'global assemblage' of eastern German self-employment itself, in that the arrival of the neoliberal race towards economic individualism must be embraced to some degree for survival, even if the social values of the past may remain. I showed how this further reflects the situation in training courses where eastern Germans sit happily learning about business practices, while also outwardly questioning capitalism's excesses when these are incompatible with their own beliefs.

This does not mean, however, that eastern German self-employed people are not prone to be vocal in their criticism of the current social and economic climate. As I showed in Chapter 5, the narrative schemes of the past – even the Marxist – could be employed by the self-employed

in this criticism, used simultaneously with noticeably pro-business utterances. What was much more prevalent, however, was the highlighting of the importance of the values pertaining to sociality that had been important under the state socialist regime. Honesty, solidarity and reticence of self-presentation were seen as the key values to be emulated. This led me to suggest that what was being witnessed was an idealised 'consociational personhood': persons who had the ability and desire to interact with others, treating them with the same respect as their 'consociates' than mere unknown 'contemporaries'. I suggested that this was also valuable for businesspersons themselves to emulate, as showing these values encourages others to engage in business with them. I gave further evidence of this in Chapters 6 and 7 which followed, and focused on a particularly precarious form of 'new self-employment' where to be successful is one of the few means to guarantee further employment in a highly competitive sector.

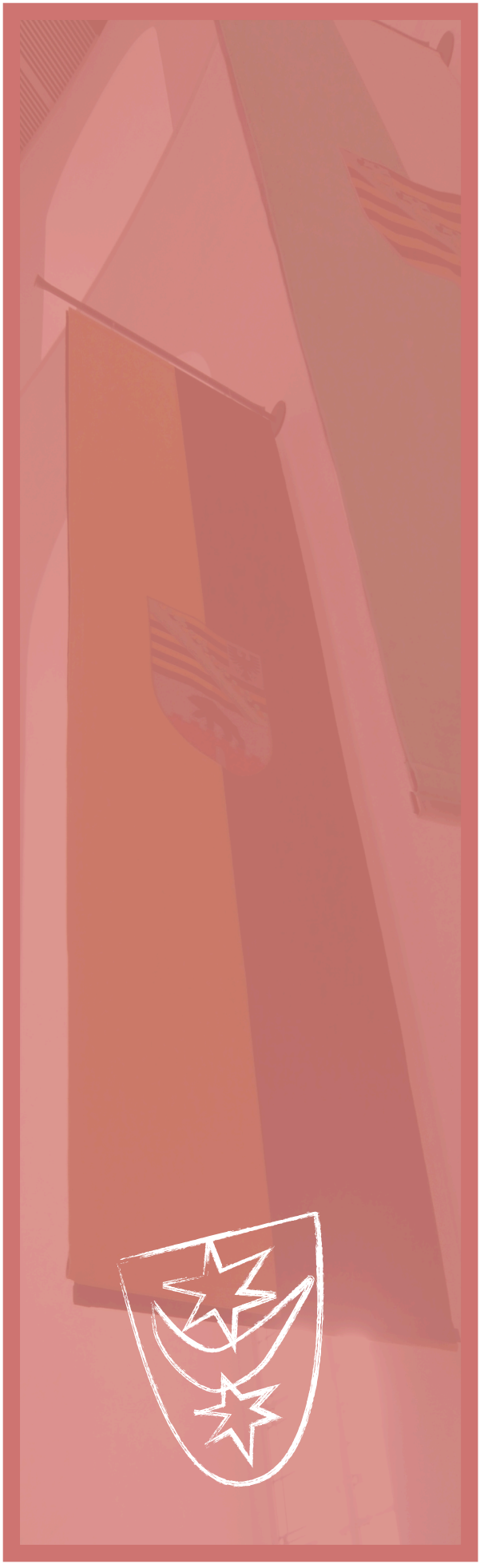
In those two chapters, based on my experiences with freelance product promoters, including time spent promoting wine in a wholesale cash-and-carry warehouse, I showed that this 'consociational personhood' is also visible in this economic sector. Further, it is one of the key means of being successful in interactions with customers and thus gaining sales. It is equally one of the key means in creating social relations within a highly mobile and intermittent working environment. This is based, firstly, on having skills which allow the promoter to present themselves, by their uses of narratives and cultural items, as being closer to the customer's consociates than their contemporaries. Secondly, the promoters use the promotional items they receive with which to do their job – 'mass-gifts' – to increase their appearance of generosity and friendliness towards the customers. In addition, these are used among promoters themselves, when gathered together, to recreate social/working relations of past, as in the GDR-era factories, to counter any sense of loneliness and isolation they might feel as freelance, temporary workers. It is another example of how the rhetoric of the past – highlighting that rhetoric can be based in practice as well as verbal or visual forms – once again is taken up, moulded and recycled in the process of living lives in the present.

In Chapter 8, I showed how a cultural item from the past long before the state socialist period – based on a person – has been used in a similarly creative way to improve the image of the city of Halle itself. I showed how the city's authorities have attempted to use the name of its 'most famous son', composer Georg Friedric Händel, to cast away its competing, problematic personification in the form of a 'Grey Diva' which represents its dark, run-down built environment. I showed how Halle's self-employed citizens are likewise creative in their own use of Händel for similar purposes, within their businesses. However, as a sign of their creativity and of a pride in their history and the city's people, also use the image of the Diva. And beside these uses of individual characters to sell, once again it is possible to view the importance of the 'consociational personhood', visibly directed at not only customers but at the wider population of the city itself.

In this thesis, and in answering the questions I posed, I have been rhetorical in the sense that I have created a broader narrative of what I had experienced in the city, based on the narratives told to me by others. There are many more stories I heard and could also have presented here. Limits of time and space have, however, precluded the presence of some fascinating creative and hardworking people. These include a bakery-shop owner husband and wife team who chose Halle as the location of their new wholemeal bread business after spending years travelling all over Europe as part of Medieval-style markets. Their use of the Halle coat of arms merged with the culinary cultural item of a sweet pastry from Leipzig to create a new Halle-version. This created not only a very tasty new product, but one which shows their own faith in the city. There was also the lady who made necklaces, or the young man who took on the franchise of an ink-cartridge refilling company and had been most successful – among others. However, apart from often highlighting the importance of the values of what I have called the 'consociational personhood', they share one further thing with those who do indeed feature within this document. This is a great generosity of spirit which manifests itself in giving of their precious time to allow me to present them at all.

There is one further narrative aspect which I wish to draw attention to, and that is that time itself is moving on in eastern Germany. Indeed, as I have suggested at times below, it appears that the whole of the country of Germany itself is becoming more '*Wossi*' in itself, as alongside this the march of global capitalism seems to move onwards. Germany itself seems to be on a much more sound economic track in comparison to the time at which I did my fieldwork, and the debates I mentioned in Chapter 5 about which of the 'big economic theories' I highlighted in Chapter 1 are 'correct' is still as unclear in those debates as ever.

In terms of persons and their skills, the person with whose products the narrative of this thesis ended, the young eastern souvenir manufacturer, when asked about easterners selling themselves, noted that while there was a definite difference between east and west, there were no doubt people in both parts who were good and bad at the task. When I mentioned that I was doing research on personhood in eastern Germany to two eastern even younger German postgraduate students in the business school of this university, it was not far from their lips as a definite cultural item. That this came from young eastern people who are engaged in what I described above as very much more towards the opposite end of the business spectrum than the economic and social policy of the GDR period, and from what I have seen in Halle and presented above, I suspect that the 'consociational personhood' is something which is not about to fade away just yet.



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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Participant information sheet and business card pack

Durham University

Department of Anthropology

Informationsblatt für Forschungsprojekt-TeilnehmerInnen

Information for research project participants

Name des Forschers Name of researcher	Gareth HAMILTON, B.A., M.A., M.A. (Doktorand PhD candidate)
Forschungsinstitution Research institution	Department of Anthropology, Durham University, GB
Projekttitel Project title	„ExistenzgründerInnen im postsozialistischen Ostdeutschland“
Projektleiter Project supervisor	Professor Dr. Michael B. CARRITHERS, Department of Anthropology, Durham University, GB

Projektziele Aims of project

→ Dieses Dissertationsprojekt an der Durham University untersucht die Erfahrungen von ostdeutschen Unternehmern und Selbständigen, und dabei besonders, wie sie die soziale und ökonomische Situation allgemein und ihre eigene im Besonderen beschreiben.

This research project for my PhD at Durham University aims to investigate the experiences of entrepreneurs and persons of independent means living in eastern Germany, and especially how they explain their opinions of the social and economic situation.

→ Das Projekt soll Interviews umfassen und, wenn möglich das Teilen von Ausschnitten ihres Alltags mit den Unternehmern und Selbständigen.

As part of the research I hope to interview, and if possible, spend some time with entrepreneurs and those of independent means to see what life is like for them.

Vertraulichkeit Confidentiality

→ Alle gesammelten Daten werden auf Wunsch so anonymisiert, dass ein Zurückverfolgen personenbezogener Informationen auf eine spezielle Person nicht mehr möglich ist.

If requested, any information which would be collected would be anonymised so that your identity would not be revealed.

→ Es wird versichert, dass alle gesammelten Informationen (also auch alles, was in den Interviews geäußert wurde) sicher verwahrt und Dritten (Projektfremden) nicht zugänglich gemacht wird (Aufnahmen werden verschlüsselt und mit einem Passwort geschützt).

Any information collected, such as what you say in interviews, would be kept securely so that no-one else from outside the project could access it. (e.g. recordings and transcripts will be encrypted and password protected)

Teilnahmebedingungen Information on participating

→ Sie können zu jeder Zeit Ihre Teilnahme beenden.

You could freely stop participating at any time.

→ Wenn Sie möchten, dass bestimmte Informationen nicht verwendet werden, können Sie das dem Forscher sagen und sie werden nicht verwendet.

If there was any information that you did not want to be used, you can tell the researcher and it will not be used.

[→]

→ Wenn Sie möchten, dass etwas nicht aufgezeichnet wird, wird auf Ihren Wunsch das Aufnahmegerät abgeschaltet.

If you would did not want something to be tape recorded, you can ask it to be stopped and it will.

→ Sie können jederzeit nach weiteren Informationen zu dem Projekt und dem Vorgehen fragen. Wenn Sie jemals Zweifel an dem haben, woran Sie teilnehmen, lassen Sie das den Forscher wissen.

It would be very important that you feel well about what is happening, so you could let the researcher know any concerns or ask any questions at any time.

Kontakt **Contact information**

→ Sie können auch jederzeit den Projektleiter mit der unten stehenden Adresse (auf Deutsch sowie Englisch) kontaktieren.

You can also contact the project supervisor in German or English at the address below for any information.

→ Nach Beendigung des Projektes wird eine allgemeine Zusammenfassung der Ergebnisse ohne Nennung einzelner Personen im Internet unter http://www.dur.ac.uk/g.e.hamilton öffentlich zugänglich sein, wo auch eine Kopie dieses Informationsblattes zu finden ist.

When the research is completed, a general summary, without reference to individuals, will be available on the internet. A copy of this information sheet is also available there. The address is http://www.dur.ac.uk/g.e.hamilton

→ Informationen über den Forscher finden Sie unter: http://www.durham.ac.uk/anthropology/postgraduate/pg_students/pg_profile/?id=4865

Information on the researcher can be found at http://www.durham.ac.uk/anthropology/postgraduate/pg_students/pg_profile/?id=4865

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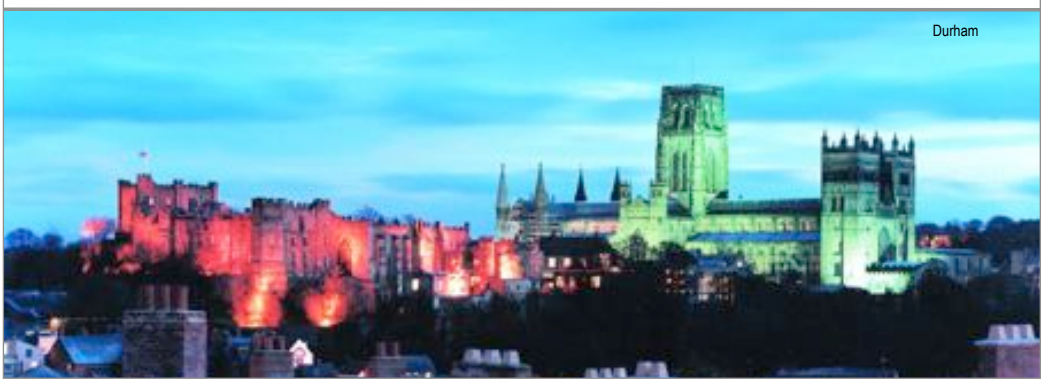
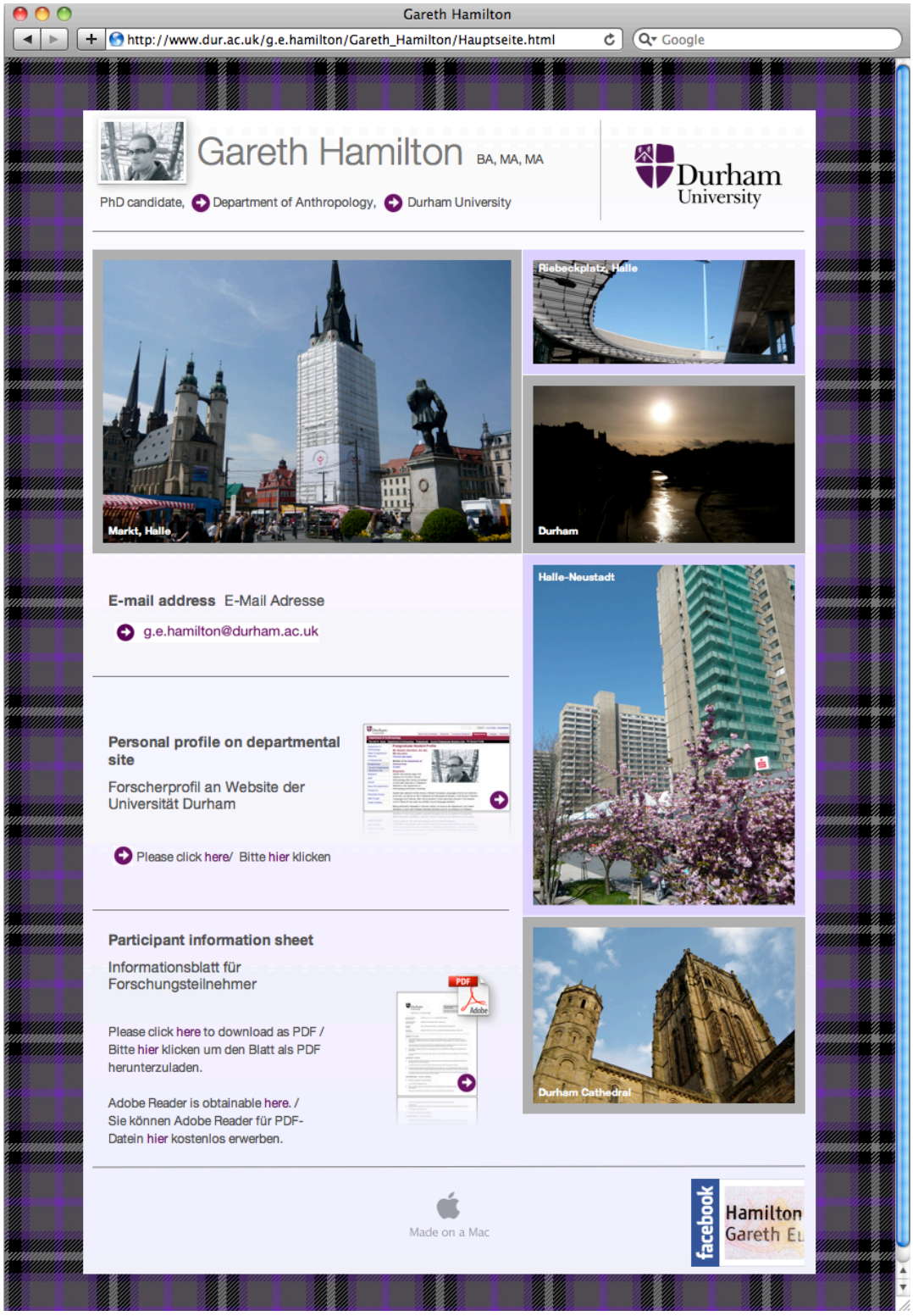


Durham

Appendix 2 – Project information website - www.dur.ac.uk/g.e.hamilton



ASKING THEM, ASKING US, LOSING TRUST?

The quandary of being asked to comment in an online dispute in eastern Germany

The situation

My eastern German fieldsite, Halle, is a city whose industrial base has been largely dismantled, unemployment increased and population shrunk by one quarter since reunification in 1990. Talking with an anthropologist resident, I commented that I detected particularly sharp sensitivity to criticism of the town wherever it came from. Agreeing, he referred to a recent example of a new western inhabitant heavily and personally criticised for his blogging on Halle. Investigating further, I contacted him and arranged an interview. Meanwhile, I discovered that another interviewee was one such blog commenter who had publicised it within the area.

The interview participants

The western blogger was a fashionable, young, left of centre, part-time media student and journalist from rural south-western Germany who was blogging for Austrian national youth radio (FM4) to make money after moving there from cosmopolitan Hamburg with his student girlfriend. He had made many efforts to make friends and get to know the town.

The other was an eastern German fashion store owner and Indie nightclub promoter, plus his fashion designer partner. His nightclub had an email list through which he publicised his events, as well as their fashion retail and design business. He seemed well-known, and during the interview he had to wave to many passersby! Thus, in his words, the blog became 'well blown around'.

The blog

The blogger said he had expected to his audience to be young far away Austrians and not Halle people. He blogged on his 'frustrations' about *provincial* life, and was shocked how quickly commenters moved to east/west themes.

TARGET

ADDITIONAL

When people in Halle discovered it and regarded it as critical of their town in the role as *eastern* rather than *provincial*. Those who commented seemed to see it as a slight which had to be righted. Items below appeared in parts of the discussion…

The publics (cf Warner 2002)

Public: Whereas the blogger envisaged Austrians, the Halle people saw the 'west' as the public of the blog, likely due to the western origins of its author. Many scholars (cf Berdahl 1999, McFalls 1995) point to eastern (and westerns) perceptions of difference after unification.

Counterpublic: Halle residents, used to unsympathetic media portrayals of both their city and region from national (Western) media, seemed to engage in these schemes of difference, and to 'resist'. Certain things seemed to cause most consternation due to their significance in previous media discourse…

Some content: some contentious 'cultural items' (Rhetoric culture theory, cf. Carrithers 2005a,b, 2009)

These are merely some examples of cultural items featured in the blog. On first appearances they may seem simple, but had potential to cause reaction. They have different, occasionally not obviously immediate, connotations within the two cultural schemata, much more contentious in the Halle/eastern counter narrative.

Berdahl (1999) shows how post-Wall eastern consumerism (and unsophistication) became symbolised in West by once rare 'luxury' bananas and eastern craze for them after Wall fell.

Blog: banana button on scale in supermarket most worn. Bananas cheap. Small choice of products.

General: Many banana jokes!

Another **informant** calls easterners 'banana people'!

Interview: 'Everthing he says is just about wanting and buying' 'Consumerism'

Comments: 'Thanks in advance for further abuse' 'Incomphrensible' 'Halle cool but you're too stupid!'

The blogger thus fits into typical schemes where westerners are seen as arrogant and spoilt 'better westerners' who even consume 'better' too. The criticism became quite personal, although many were open to debate and requested evidence for the claims.

The blogger also commented on coffee availability, (not unjustifiably!) pointing out that the staff in restaurants are grumpy and incompetent. Thinks only one place serves good coffee in Halle.

Blog: Can't get decent coffee, even from McDonalds!

Interview: McDonalds is reliable, simple if needed. Put it in to get interest. 'Knew might annoy a bit but did not expect to get thrown around ears!'

McDonald's coffee

Interview: 'Who goes to McDonalds for coffee?!'

Comment: 'If standardised coffee tastes bad for you, it is your problem!' 'Don't trust you to find cool places if you go to McD's for coffee!'

Western relatives once sent their eastern relatives coffee before 1990. After reunification easterners soon discovered the symbolic hierarchy of brands. Western stereotypes are thrown back at him as evidence of his unqualified status of judge on Halle.

Even twenty years after reunification the blog reflects the space of mistrust on both sides of the 'wall in the head', where seemingly small things can still rapidly take on disputed meaning when viewed and interpreted from opposing sides. This is neither pathological nor 'silly', but justified and readily empathisable on both.

Between both sides: the ethnographer and the interview

Ethnographic interviews are normally intimate, relatively private and conducted under disciplinary/institutional ethical guidelines reflecting our moral responsibilities to informants. The publications which disseminate their content are produced under similar conditions. In contrast, journalists are often observed (e.g. *Bild* in Germany) operating under looser standards and where the interesting, copy selling, profit making 'story' is prioritised. The blog, with its demonstrated rapid and unpredictable propagation, coupled with its similar 'undisciplined' 'writing back' potential is far removed from this comparatively 'safe' space. When I was asked if something I said comparing Halle to Austria could be used in the blog, I felt both collided. The volatility and spreadability observed, and as I had interviewed both blogger and designer, highlights the difficulty that what is said in one space could easily and rapidly transfer to the other. Through this, the ethnographic interview's ethical condition can be nullified if its boundaries can be thus punctured. If a comment on coffee can cause significant anger, what else we might innocently say in the process of empathising (or even politely agreeing) with our interview partners could likewise easily damage the image of neutrality and trustworthiness accompanying our sense of cultural relativism? How should we deal with such cases? Should we privilege *our* ethics? Might we, if this represents a special case, even request our interviewees afford us the same ethical respect we give them? How could the interview as rich data source be used here, without risking the unquestioned benefits such close contact with our informants provides?

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With kind assistance from E·S·R·C ECONOMIC & SOCIAL RESEARCH COUNCIL